TRAVELLER

ALIENS OF CHARTED SPACE: VOLUME 2

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

ALIENS OF CHARTED SPACE VOLUME 2

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INTRODUCTION

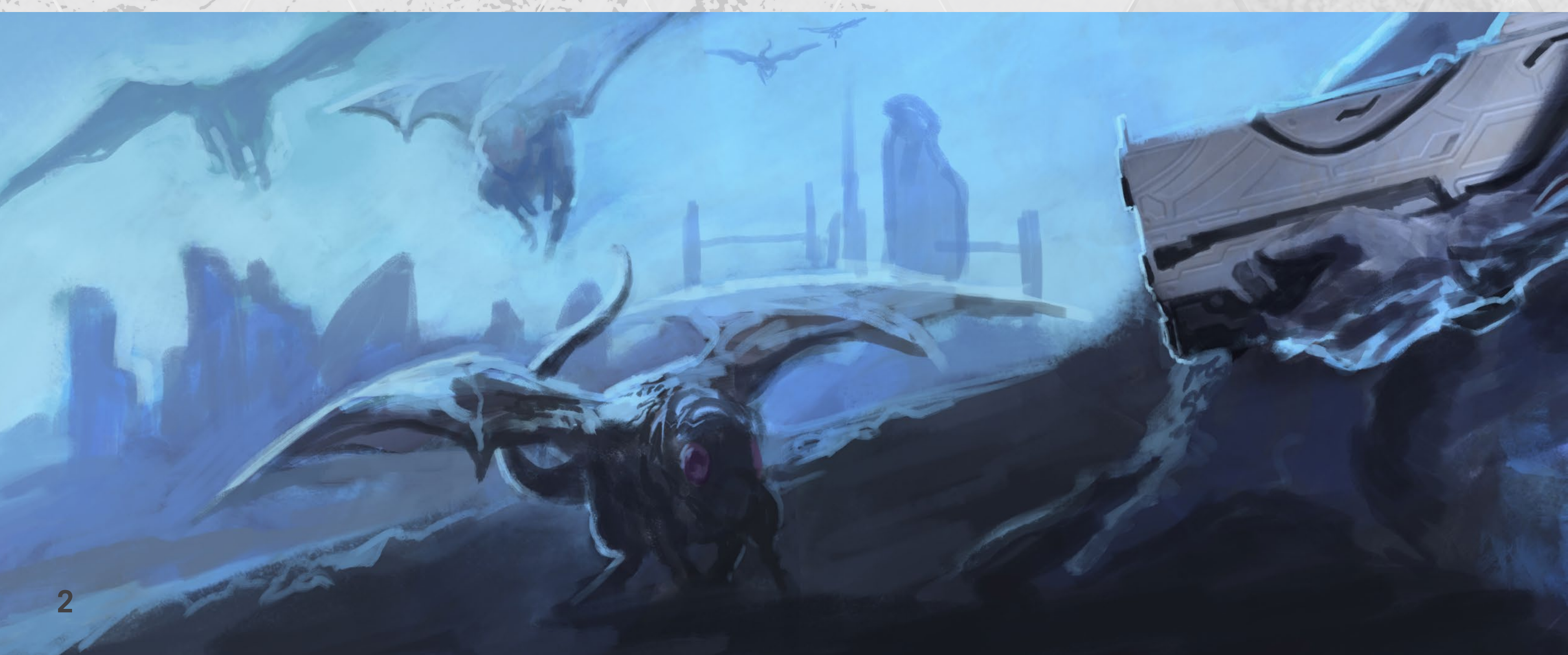
Alien races and cultures often make handy 'bad guys' or plot vehicles for entertainment. For example, in low-budget Imperial dramas it is not uncommon to find that a Hiver has manipulated everyone to create a bad situation or a Solomani agent has done something horrible. These actions need not be explained; they have become tropes in entertainment and provide a convenient way of getting on with the plot without needing to provide a backstory or motivation for the character. This does the cultures in question a disservice, of course, and hardly furthers interstellar diplomacy and understanding.

The reality of these cultures is rather more complex. The Solomani, for example, are often portrayed as jackbooted racists but in fact can be better thought of as snobs rather than haters. They have good and – some would say – provable reasons for 'knowing' they are the ultimate expression of Humaniti. It is their destiny to lead and to show others the path to greatness. This can represent itself as racism and a view that others are inferior, but the typical Solomani is not an alien-hater.

The Droyne are widely known for their caste system and general weirdness, but there is much more to them than that. They have reasons for everything they do; reasons based on millennia of specialised evolution that led to their caste system. Understanding how the Droyne think is the key to portraying them effectively. A Droyne is not mindless, like an insect or part of a hive-mind, but they think in terms of community rather than self. Without their community a Droyne is worthless and will probably just die, so sacrifice on behalf of the community may make more sense than self-preservation. Droyne thinking is also directed by the caste system – a Worker or Technician thinks in terms of accomplishing the tasks they have been given; a Drone thinks in terms of protecting and nurturing the young, and seeing to the common good of the community.

The Hivers' mindset is based on cooperation, but cooperation in which others act to the benefit of the individual. From this comes the concept of manipulation; getting others to do what you want without necessarily realising they are serving your ends. Given that they are physically weak and cowardly, the idea of working through others without direct coercion makes perfect sense to Hivers.

Travellers and referees alike can benefit from learning more about the cultures they encounter, and remembering that everyone does what they do for a reason that makes sense at the time. Master manipulators do make mistakes, of course, and a society-minded Droyne might occasionally go off task, but for the most part the actions of these societies can be predicted by outsiders even if they cannot be understood.



CHAPTER-ONE

THE SOLOMANI

The word 'Solomani' has a number of different meanings, most of which overlap. It roughly translates as 'people of Sol' but this, too, has varying connotations. It can refer to the humans who consider the Sol system to be their spiritual home or a cultural and political movement based around those people. The word Solomani is sometimes also used to refer to a wider group of species including uplifted creatures native to Terra, such as Apes and Dolphins. It can be used, with equal fervour, to describe those who belong to the Solomani culture or those who belong to the Solomani race – these two are not always the same thing. Indeed, for all they are the original human genetic stock and their culture is largely derived from the values of the societies of Old Earth, the Solomani are one of the misunderstood racial or cultural groups in Charted Space.

THE ORIGINAL HUMANS

Humans are the most common starfaring race in Charted Space. There are at least 45 nearly identical subspecies, each of which developed some form of civilisation on its own homeworld. Of the Major Races of Charted Space – defined as a culture that developed the jump drive without outside assistance – three are human. These are the Vilani, the Zhodani and the Solomani. The Vilani and Zhodani were transplanted to other worlds by the Ancients, whilst the Solomani developed on Earth, the original homeworld of Humaniti.

By the time the Solomani ventured out into space and developed the jump drive, other human groups were already on the cosmic stage. Most notably, from a Solomani point of view, the Vilani had created a large empire whose borders lay close to Terra. Upon encountering the Vilani, humans from Terra learned of the existence of other human races. The collective term 'Humaniti' was applied to all human races and is still used today.

Prior to contact with the Solomani the other races of Humaniti had no good explanation for two fundamental questions. How did so many genetically human races come to evolve in widely separated star systems at approximately the same time? Why were none of the races of Humaniti biologically related to the other life forms of their homeworlds?

On Vland, the Vilani homeworld, no animal had any closer relation to a human than a human did to a crab or even a pine tree. There were few native diseases that affected humans and none with animal vectors. Animals were useless for comparative anatomical studies, nor could they be used to test drugs or other biological processes prior to their use on humans.

Similar limitations existed on the worlds of most other races of Humaniti. As a result, the development of medical and biological science in most non-Terran human races was stunted. The minimal threat from micro-organisms and parasites helped contribute to higher overall health; the average Vilani had a longer life expectancy than a Terran. Vilani medical techniques also benefited from a reduced risk of post-operative infections.

The Solomani provided the answer to these questions. Their homeworld was unique in possessing a complete ecosystem directly related to humans along with fossil and genetic evidence indicating they had naturally evolved there. Verification was delayed by interstellar warfare with the Vilani Empire and by the Long Night that followed. Centuries later, after Solomani-Vilani civilisation coalesced around the Third Imperium, Magis Sergei haut-Devroe proposed his Solomani Hypothesis. It theorised that Humaniti had originated from early human stock on Terra that was transported by a mysterious race to their respective homes some 300,000 to 320,000 years ago. A scientific mission to Terra confirmed the genetic and fossil evidence. Further corroborating evidence was provided by the existence of similar Ancients ruins in many of the home systems of Humaniti, all dating to the same period. Today, haut-Devroe's Solomani Hypothesis is generally accepted as factual: Solomani are the original humans.

This may also explain why Terra developed an interstellar civilisation much later than the Vilani, Zhodani and some other minor races of Humaniti. It is possible Terrans were held back because early civilisation led to crowding in cities before modern sanitation could be devised. On Terra, these towns and cities served as prime breeding grounds for disease, resulting in massive plagues that devastated entire populations. In contrast, transplanted races such as the Vilani, Zhodani and even the non-human but Terran-related Vargr could sustain larger urban centres or colonise new continents on their homeworlds without a risk of biological apocalypse. Advocates of this theory compare the Terrans with the Aslan and K'kree, who also achieved jump drive technology relatively late and like Terra suffered from multiple native diseases. Extreme anatomical differences between humanity and Hivers, and lack of data on the enigmatic Droyne, make it difficult to draw comparisons with these alien species.

BASELINE HUMANS

The present-day Solomani race is a broad subspecies that includes all terrestrial ethnic and racial groups. This 'Solomani race' can be considered the baseline humans. Their physiology is the standard to which other human species tend to be compared. In many cases there are few differences but some human races have diverged quite considerably.

The other races of Humaniti were taken from Terra in the period before modern humans had fully evolved, then spent over 300,000 years adapting to conditions on their own homeworlds. Some were also subjected to Ancient genetic engineering. As a result, there are minor but real physiological differences between the various human cousins, of a magnitude comparable to the differences between modern man and the Neanderthals. These distinctions can include differences in facial features, colouring, hair, blood type, number of teeth, circadian rhythm or even lifespan.

These differences are most notable in those human races that adapted to planets with significantly different environments, such as a lighter or heavier gravity. However most human races can interbreed with Solomani and each other. Some races, notably the Vilani, can pass as Solomani in almost any circumstances short of a detailed medical examination.

During the Rule of Man and Third Imperium widespread intermarriage between Vilani and Solomani families occurred, especially among the middle classes. Today, the majority of the Imperial population blend into *homo*genous mixed race. Only careful genetic testing or the occasional appearance of blood types C and D, which are non-existent in pure Solomani, can be used to distinguish racial Solomani from the Imperial mix.

Distinct Solomani can still be identified among the Imperial nobility, who keep careful track of lineage, and on those world's first settled by Terra or its daughter colonies. The majority of worlds with distinct Solomani populations exist in the area within 50 parsecs of Terra and in particular on those worlds controlled by the Solomani Confederation, where racial purity is a matter of ideological importance.

Smaller clusters of worlds with pure Solomani populations exist in isolated areas of Charted Space far beyond the Solomani Sphere. These were settled by colonisation ships launched from Terra long before the Imperium was founded. Examples include the Sword Worlds on the fringes of the Spinward Marches and the Islands subsectors in the Reft sector.

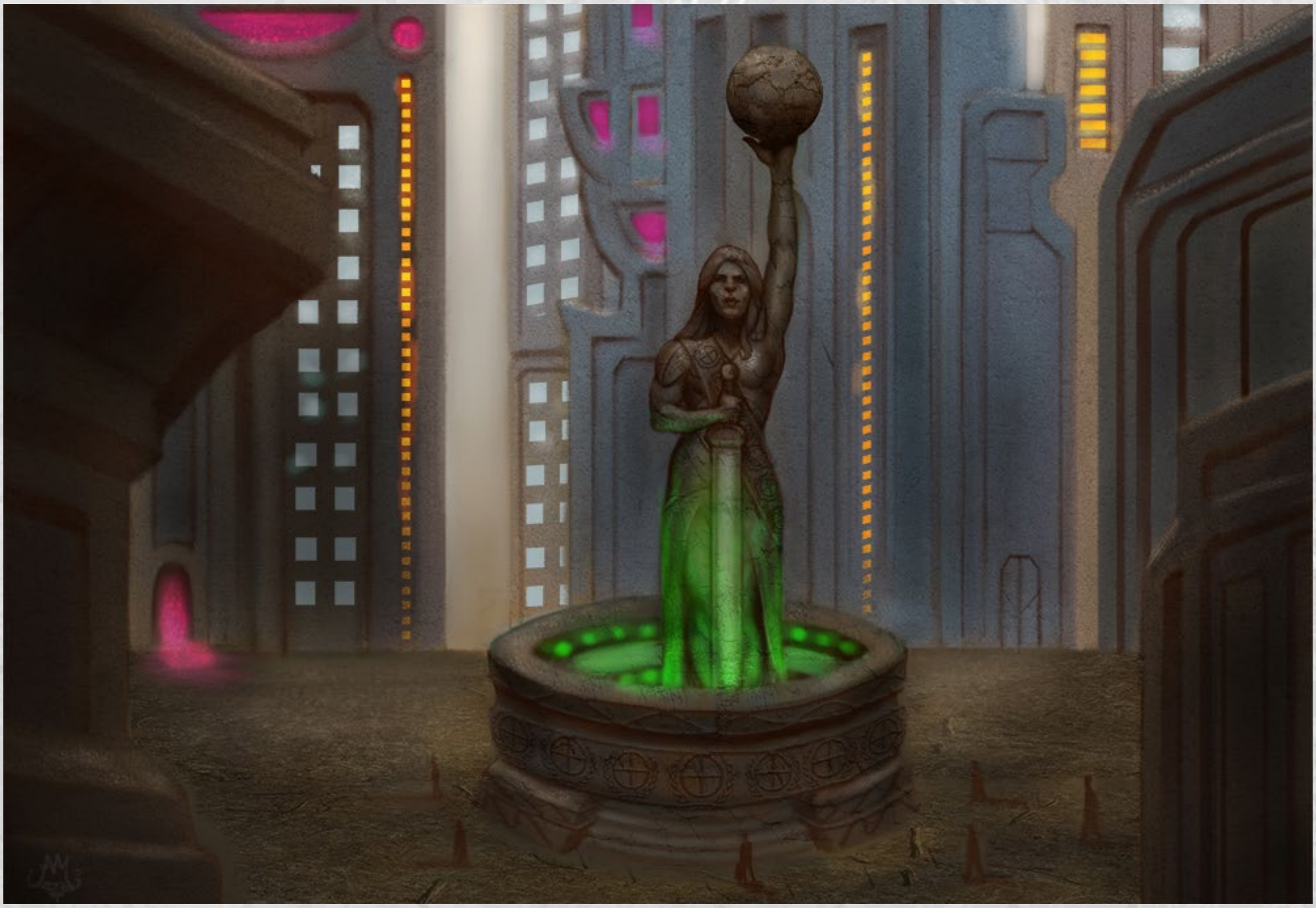
Solomani: Haters or Snobs?

The Solomani have for many years been portrayed in Imperial propaganda as nasty racists who hate anything that did not originate on Terra. This is a highly distorted image, although it is true that the Solomani Confederation does have a number of racist policies and some do manage to stoop to the level of the stereotype.

In reality, the Solomani people see themselves as the best of all humans, largely because they matured as a species on Terra where they belonged rather than being transplanted all across Charted Space. This feeling of superiority sometimes manifests as contempt for outsiders but more commonly it is a feeling that the Solomani bloodlines must be kept pure in order to protect the talent of the Solomani people. The closest parallel is the archaic tradition of royal families protecting their bloodlines – in neither case does this imply hate towards those not ‘of the blood’, although condescension is not uncommon.

However, experiences can shape attitudes, as can propaganda. It has at times been useful to the Solomani Confederation’s authorities to invoke scary images of ‘Vegan conspiracies’ and ‘Vilani cultural imperialism undermining our traditional values’. The combination of this sort of propaganda and an excessive level of pride in those traditional values can create a racially-motivated hostility but this is not universal among the Solomani.

Overall, the Solomani people tend to be snobbish and proud rather than hostile. They have been brought up to believe they are the best of all humans and do not react well to having this attitude challenged. They are not, however, likely to react in a pitchforks-and-torches manner to seeing an alien in a Solomani restaurant or encountering a culturally Vilani human on the starport concourse.



CHAPTER-TWO

A HISTORY OF THE SOLOMANI

The early history of the Solomani is the history of all humans in Charted Space. The divergence occurred around 300,000 years ago, when early humans were transplanted to other worlds. After this, each human race had its own story whilst the Solomani continued to develop on Terra.

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY

Classification of Terrestrial life is based on a series of categories that show relationships to other life forms, such as family, genus and species. A species classifies members of a genus that can interbreed with each other and is identified by two words: the genus, which is capitalised and the species, which is not.

About 15 million years ago the family of hominids – the great apes – evolved on Terra. These hominids included several genera; among them gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos of genus *Pan* and orang-utans of genus *Pongo*. Some four to six million years ago the hominid genus *Australopithecus* ('southern ape') diverged from a common ancestor with chimpanzees. Australopiths shared traits with both apes and modern humans, including simple tool use, and spread widely through Africa.

A mere two and a half million years ago, what may have been the first distinct humans appeared on Earth. The *Homo* genus were related to *Australopithecus* but characterised by increasingly greater brain capacity and linguistic ability, an erect stance and use of stone tools. The first true archaic species of early *Homo sapiens* ('wise man') evolved between 500,000 and 200,000 years ago. They were nomadic hunter-gatherers, the ancestors and cousins of modern humans – and through alien intervention, many other races as well.

The Ancients and Humaniti

The Ancients were a mysterious, highly advanced alien race that dominated Charted Space 300,000 to 400,000 years ago. They visited Terra about –310,000, when the world was emerging from an ice age and several subspecies of early *Homo sapiens* existed. It is uncertain how long they stayed on Terra or how many times they visited.

What is known is that the Ancients took samples of *Homo sapiens* away with them to their own worlds. They proceeded to breed humans for use as servants, pets or both and established sizable populations on perhaps 100 worlds throughout Charted Space,

Dating Systems

The present date is 1105 in the Imperial calendar or 5625 AD in the Terran dating system. The dates in this chapter use Imperial dating unless otherwise indicated by AD or BC, which instead indicates a Terran year.

The following are correspondences between Imperial and Terran dates.

Imperial Year	Terran Year	Event
0	4521 AD	Founding date of the Third Imperium
871	5392 AD	Founding date of the Solomani Confederation
1002	5523 AD	Siege of Terra; end of the Solomani Rim War
1105	5626 AD	Present date

including Vland and Zhodane. The Ancients performed genetic experiments on some human stock, creating variant human races. Today, all of these variant races and the original humans are collectively known by the term Humaniti.

The human populations maintained by the Ancients flourished under their care for a few millennia, until the Ancients destroyed their own civilisation in a cataclysmic conflict known as the Final War. The human populations were also devastated and reduced to a primitive state. Nevertheless, some remnants survived on at least 45 worlds. Forced to adapt to diverse environments, these scattered orphans evolved in different directions and became distinct subspecies of Humaniti. Nevertheless, they remained biologically members of the larger human species, most of them still interfertile to a greater or lesser degree with Terran humans and with each another.

The scattered human races – Humaniti – learned to live on their homeworlds without assistance from the Ancients. On some worlds, the technology of the Ancients continued to function for a time. In some cases this assisted the human population, in others it terrorised them or threatened their very existence. Eventually the installations and devices of the Ancients wore out, leaving the humans and other transplanted races to look after themselves.

The transplanted populations charted their own path thereafter. Typically this was characterised by a slow climb back to some form of civilisation, often with multiple setbacks. Many of these human populations were barbarians or low-technology, fragmented cultures when found by those that had progressed more quickly. The Zhodani of Zhodane and the Vilani of Vland both developed the jump drive independently and created interstellar communities which absorbed some of the ‘barbarians’ they encountered.

Had they been discovered at this time the Solomani would have been just another barbarian-human group but the stagnation of the Vilani Imperium resulted in expansion halting before Terra was reached. It is possible that explorers knew of the humans on that unremarkable world to rimward of the border but there was no incentive to study them or annex their world. The idea that insignificance saved the Solomani from conquest before the rise of civilisation on Terra is unpalatable to many but it is the reality of the situation.

THE RISE OF THE TERRAN CONFEDERATION

On Terra, *Homo sapiens* continued the slow evolution into its modern form, *Homo sapiens* sapiens, which became dominant on Terra about 50,000 years ago. They developed increasingly sophisticated tools, complex language, early art, music and the beginnings of society. Between 30,000 and 100,000 years ago several cousin subspecies also existed, such as *Homo neanderthalensis*. Terra was at that time in the grip of an ice age. Existence was tough and the ice sheets apparently destroyed all signs of visitation by the Ancients.

By the Last Glacial Maximum the people of Earth were recognisable as modern humans. As the ice retreated and habitable land opened up, groups of hunter-gatherers exploited the new opportunities. Populations increased and eventually people began to settle down and work the land rather than following the food sources. Around –13,000, advances in stone tools made large-scale clearing of forests possible and settled agriculture developed.

The transition from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle was not immediate, nor always successful, but over time permanent settlements began to appear. This allowed more complex work to be undertaken, using tools made first from copper then bronze. Trade was conducted over distances that can seem incredible to modern people and groupings emerged. Loose confederations of tribes became kingdoms or empires, only to collapse and be replaced by another.

There were setbacks and ‘dark ages’ in some regions even as other civilisations were flourishing but the overall trend was towards technological and social progress. Nation-states emerged and grew in power, and arguably it was rivalry between them that pushed technological progress onward at an ever-increasing rate. The nations of Terra eventually reached the point where they could make war anywhere on the globe and they did. After two recognised world wars and other conflicts that encompassed multiple continents, the space race began.

The Terran space age began when the first orbital satellite, Sputnik I, was launched in –2564. This was the Terran year 1957 AD, a time when the planet’s population was still divided into rival national super powers. Efforts to prevent another world war had produced an international framework for cooperation and dispute resolution. This was called the United Nations but in reality it was almost powerless and the nations themselves were anything but united.

Initially, space operations were a competition between two national super powers, the Soviet Union and United States, who saw it as new frontier to be explored for national prestige and a high ground whose control provided military advantage. Spurred by national pride and scientific curiosity, they sent humans into orbit, launched explorers to walk on their moon and sent probes throughout their solar system.

With technology limited to crude reaction drives, manned space travel was immensely expensive. Ambitious plans to build bases on Earth's moon or to colonise the nearby planet Mars were put forward but struggled against both practical and financial obstructions. It seemed that other worlds might remain forever out of reach. However, the world was changing. The superpowers could not align the immense cost of missions to other planets with their agendas but there was big money to be made in space. At first it was commercial satellite launches that attracted private corporations into the space arena but the quest for reduced launch costs resulted in an ability to get almost anything into orbit. Orbital space became cluttered with debris and crowded with satellites. Through this hazardous space-reef vessels plied between space hotels for the super-rich, research installations and even small factories.

Eventually, orbital traffic control was made the responsibility of a new agency, the United Nations Space Coordination Agency (UNSCA). UNSCA was also given the thankless task of removing orbital debris and enforcing international law in space. Over time, it evolved into a promoter of multinational scientific projects and a coordinating body for global endeavours such as planetary defence against asteroid strikes. UNSCA became a clearinghouse for scientific and technical information on space operations and techniques, some of which resulted in valuable patents.

Orbital development ushered in a renewed age of manned deep space exploration. In the middle of the 21st century, small but permanent bases were established on Luna, the asteroid belt and later Mars. Some were national ventures, while others were crewed on a cooperative international basis under the auspices of UNSCA. Industry also began to venture into deep space, first in the transport and space tourism sectors, then asteroid mining and manufacturing.

UNSCA expanded further to monitor and supervise all space traffic. It also came to jointly hold patents on improvements to spacecraft equipment and microgravity industrial processes and their royalties helped fund the agency. Additional income came from performing services associated with debris removal, traffic control and equipment inspections, and from contributions from national members. Space was the new frontier for economic endeavour and the cost of going it alone was such that contributions to UNSCA were seen as an attractive option.

The result was that UNSCA became a powerful political entity in its own right, influencing and shaping the policies of Earth-bound governments. It ceased to be merely a facilitator for the activities of others and began undertaking projects of its own. UNSCA established research facilities throughout within the Solar System: a high-temperature laboratory on Mercury, a solar power station in Earth orbit, an electronics lab on Luna investigating the new field of gravitic technology and an engineering station in the asteroid belt. Originally a mining facility specialising in rare earth materials, its focus soon turned to study of exotic propulsion technologies that earlier work at Luna had pioneered. It was UNSCA's breakthrough physics lab in the asteroid belt that developed the manoeuvre drive thruster.

The m-drive powered Earth's new generation of deep space craft, opening up the solar system and reducing travel times from months to days, permitting the design of true spaceships. Vessels with the size and reliability of ocean going vessels replaced the slow, delicate and cramped solar sail and reaction drive craft that came before. Expansion throughout the solar system was rapid and the possibility of visiting other star systems began to seem feasible.

The m-drive permitted long periods of continuous acceleration, allowing a vessel to reach a speed whereby an interstellar voyage might be feasible. It might still take decades, or even centuries, but for the first time the stars were within reach of Terran humans. Nations and multinational alliances planned interstellar missions. Terra's first sublight starship, the European Union's *Europa*, was a giant vessel by earlier standards, intended for a multi-year voyage to Alpha Centauri. Designs for similar craft followed.

Royalties for the new UNSCA gravitic and thruster technology patents covered the running costs UNSCA and made a substantial contribution toward the parent United Nations budget. Some historians cite this as the beginning of the move towards a 'world government' on Terra; one governing the interaction between the population of Earth and the wider universe rather than being primarily concerned with interactions between Terran nation-states. The UN was not, at that time, a government as such but it finally possessed the power and prestige to take a lead in affairs on Terra rather than being beholden to its largest contributors.

UNSCA's new wealth helped fund further scientific research. In 2087 AD (-2439) this paid off with the most significant scientific discovery in humanity's history: the jump drive. UNSCA's asteroid lab, chosen for its ease of studying micro gravity fluctuations during advanced gravitic module research, had turned out to be the ideal location for conducting interstellar drive experimentation. An environment far from any planetary body was required in order that the space-folding effects of jump drive could be achieved.

The fact that the strange new jump drive permitted faster than light travel was not immediately apparent. The first jumps took place over interplanetary distances. For a voyage between Ceres and Earth or Mars, the one-week travel time was actually slower than a constant acceleration trip using the newly developed manoeuvre drive. Moreover, some attempts at greater jumps ended in disaster, due to the then-limited understanding of the risks of jumping in proximity to a world's gravity. Even the first interstellar missions continued to be built with older m-drive propulsion over the next few decades.

As the 21st century came to a close, a spirit of optimism and adventure seemed to have taken hold of humanity. Scientific wonders like flying cars, teleporting spaceships, cryogenic sleep and advanced nuclear fusion had all became realities. Human colonies and commerce sprouted like weeds throughout the planets and planetoids of the solar system. Old restrictions were cast away and experiments were performed in fields once considered taboo, such as using genetic engineering to enhance the intelligence of smarter animals such as chimps and dolphins. The *Europa* mission was followed by the launch of other generation starships, in a daring effort to conquer the distant stars at sublight speeds. It was in this atmosphere that humanity discovered it was not alone.

First Contact

UNSCA had licensed its jump drive to its national members, in particular the United States government. They began testing its capabilities, launching missions farther and farther out, to Uranus, Neptune, Pluto and the cometary Oort Cloud. It took several years before a US Space Force team based at Luna attempted the first interstellar mission. Since the nearest stars were just out of range of the then-available jump technology, they established an intermediate stopover and refuelling point at about one parsec out.

Partly due to political pressure to not upstage the ongoing *Europa* sublight mission that was still voyaging to Alpha Centauri, the US mission chose as their destination Barnard's Star, the second closest system to Sol. *StarLeaper* 1 set out in 2096 AD (-2425) and returned less than a year later. Originally, their homecoming was planned as a triumph, a testimony to American ingenuity and pioneer spirit. Instead, they returned in secret, reporting to an emergency session of UNSCA's governing board. *StarLeaper 1* had made first contact with an alien culture: intelligent extra-terrestrials that were undeniably human beings!

Barnard was the site of a small Vilani prospecting base, a minor outpost of the Vilani Empire: the Ziru Sirka or Grand Empire of Stars. Many thousands of years ago, the Vilani branch of Humaniti, placed on the planet Vland by the Ancients, had invented jump drive themselves. They used this technology to expand through a vast region of space, encountering conquering and assimilating many other human and non-human alien races in the process.

The Vilani Consolidation Wars lasted 1,000 years but once no independent states remained on the Ziru Sirka's borders, their empire ceased to expand. Its furthest rimward provincial border terminated just parsecs away from Terra. Another dozen centuries of peace and prosperity raised Vilani civilisation to a new plateau. While interstellar exploration had all but ceased, social and economic integration continued and standards of living and technology reached a uniformly comfortable level across the Empire. Stability was emphasised over innovation. Scientific research ground to a halt, as Vilani culture became locked into heredity caste system. Working under the distant direction of the Shadow Emperor, giant corporate bureaux supervised all aspects of government, trade and industry. The Ziru Sirka's provincial sectors closest to Terra fell under the control of Sharurshid, a bureau specialising in trade and transport.

The tales the American astronauts heard of the size and power of the Vilani Empire were almost unbelievable but it was obvious that the aliens were stronger than any one Terran nation could ever deal with. Joint UNSCA expeditions were quickly dispatched to negotiate with the Vilani leaders on Barnard and later on the Vilani-settled worlds of Gashidda and Nusku. A crash programme was also launched to settle Barnard despite the Vilani prospectors' presence there.

It came as a terrible shock to Terrans that the majority of worlds beyond a few parsecs distance from Sol were already claimed by the Ziru Sirka. Popular sentiment, quickly echoed by politicians, held it was unfair for aliens from distant stars to claim worlds so close to Terra. Individual nations expanded their space forces and began building military and civilian starships, even as a nervous trade began with the Vilani. This exchange was lucrative. While Terra lagged about two Tech Levels behind, at TL9 to the Vilani Empire's TL11, many Terran medical and biotechnological goods and even some food products, were superior to what the Vilani had to offer. The technological advantage held by the Vilani would prove fleeting, as Terran engineers quickly began to reverse engineer Imperial technologies. The reasons behind Vilani backwardness in biotechnology was not immediately understood but its implications for balance of trade were enthusiastically exploited.

Mercantile and scientific contact between both races brought understanding and prosperity but also exposed Terrans to the Vilani ruling caste. Their condescending sense of superiority toward a single-world race on a distant provincial frontier was strong enough to transcend cultural barriers. Terran traders and diplomats made little progress at receiving formal recognition from the Vilani aristocracy. Instead, they defied Vilani bureaux-imposed regulations to make their own trade agreements with whatever Imperial worlds they liked and began to reach out to dissident factions within the empire.

There was a growing sense among both Terran nations and supranational bodies like UNSCA that it would only be a matter of time before the Vilani attempted to forcefully incorporate Terra into the Ziru Sirka. The Barnard and Alpha Centauri outposts were reinforced and then fortified, and the growing national star forces began preparing for interstellar operations. Even as the Vilani Empire slept Terra prepared – with increasing urgency – for an interstellar war.

The First Interstellar War

War was perhaps inevitable sooner or later and the question of 'when' was answered at Barnard in -2408 (2118 AD). A caravan of Vilani merchant starships ignored traffic control signals from the American base, leading to an exchange of fire. Two Vilani vessels were destroyed. War had begun but the attitude of each side to the conflict was very different. To the people of Terra, this was likely to be an all-out battle for survival against tremendous odds. To the Vilani Imperium, however, it was nothing more than a small border incident.

At first, the Vilani Empire was unaware that a war had broken out; the very idea the insignificant Terrans might actually consider taking on the Vilani Imperium was laughable. To the Imperium, the incident was merely the sort of thing that happened from time-to-time; some upstart world had transgressed and needed correcting. Thus a punitive expedition was launched, rather than a war-fighting force. The operational model was well-tried and had become traditional in these matters. A show of force, perhaps a skirmish, then the dictation of surrender and reparation terms. Only escort-sized warships were deployed, without accompanying assault ships and ground troops.

The conflict went as the Vilani force expected, at least at first. They met and defeated the Terran squadrons in space, then bombarded the Barnard's Star outposts. Confident that these barbarians had learned their lesson, the Imperial fleet then withdrew rather than pressing on to Terra. This was fortunate for the Terrans, who had no experience in interstellar warfare, lacked unity of command and had deployed a technologically inferior fleet. Their several national squadrons had fought bravely but without coordination. Predictably, they were overwhelmed without difficulty by the confident and well-organised Vilani force.

The 'barbarians' learned lessons from the conflict but not the ones the Imperials hoped. Instead they turned their efforts to countering the superiority of the Vilani ships. Although technologically inferior, the Terran vessels were optimised and commanded with a courage born of desperation. Designs were refined and tactics honed in a series of skirmishes between national forces and elements of the Vilani fleet. This had the effect of confusing the Vilani commanders, as they thought the Terrans were a unified government. Ships of one nationality used different tactics and weaponry to those of others, making it difficult to choose which of the traditional doctrines would be the most effective. The Vilani Imperium of that time was hidebound and inflexible, having long ago abandoned aggressive initiative for careful adherence to tried-and-tested tactics.

It was four years before another fleet engagement was fought; a battle that the Terran forces had been training for and even rehearsing for many months. Predictable tactics placed elements of the Vilani fleet in a position to be overwhelmed by massed firepower whilst other units were drawn off by deception or hit-and-run attacks. The battle was costly for both sides but the Terrans were willing to take the losses and keep fighting – or more accurately they thought they had no choice but to do so.

For their part, the Vilani officials commanding the punitive expedition were dismayed at the losses they had received and did not consider defeating the Terrans to be worth the cost. They were already in the awkward position of having to explain the losses they had taken, which was politically damaging. Faced with a choice between battling on with what they had or the humiliation of requesting additional forces to deal with some trivial barbarians, they chose what seemed like the best option.

The Terrans needed time to make good their losses; the Vilani commanders wanted to end the fighting and claim they had won to avoid damage to their reputations. Thus an unofficial armistice was agreed and both sides stepped back. Peace of a sort returned to the region in -2400. It was both uneasy and short.

The Unification of Terra

Their initial defeat taught the nations of Terra that there is no substitute for a unified high command and political structure. In the course of the three decades after the first Interstellar War, the United Nations transformed itself from a debating society into a true world government with the primary purpose of defending the solar system and the Human race against the Vilani Empire. To create such a government the Secretary General was given far more extensive powers and recognised as the supreme executive leader of Terra. The Secretariat, previously an advisory group, was made the legislative body and took over most of the powers of the old Security Council. The General Assembly was retained as a forum for debate of issues but had no executive power. The Security Council was disbanded.

Colonies on other worlds, initially Luna, Mars, Mercury, Barnard and Alpha Centauri, were granted seats in the United Nations as well. With their admission, the UN formally changed its name, first to the United Worlds, then to the Terran Confederation. Some degree of autonomy was granted to the member worlds off Terra but the existing government structure of the United Nations continued to be the common legislative body for the Confederation. Founded in -2398, it proved a hardy structure, surviving for centuries until the end of the Interstellar Wars. Even thousands of years later, its name remains a powerful symbol to the Solomani people.

The Second and Third Interstellar Wars

Terra benefited from the sheer size and structure of the Ziru Sirka, which was more concerned with internal politics than some minor incident on the borders. The provincial Vilani administration was charged with winning wars and maintaining the power of the Empire but operated under a limited budget. Appeals to higher levels of government and ultimately to the Shadow Emperor were costly in terms of personal power and prestige, and so generally avoided. In consequence, the provincial governor (Vilani *saarpuhii*) often compromised, choosing to accept a truce with some territorial losses while claiming victory for any tactical successes in reports to the emperor.

The Second and Third Interstellar Wars were marked by see-saw exchanges of territory, with the majority of the fighting in the Dingir and Sol subsectors. The most dangerous moment came during the height of the Third Interstellar War, when Imperial forces broke through and Terra itself was besieged. Despite a nuclear bombardment that killed tens of millions, the homeworld refused to surrender. The overextended Imperial fleet was unable to capture the planet and withdrew. The attack on Terra was a turning point in the Interstellar Wars, convincing the population of Terra that there was no turning back; they must triumph or perish.

Empty Peace and a Return to War

The Third Interstellar War was followed by an extended armistice known as the Empty Peace. During this period the Terran Confederation expanded its colonies, administered and settled captured Vilani worlds and expanded their interstellar commerce. Not only did the captured Vilani worlds expand the Terrans' industrial base directly, it also became possible to examine the whole spectrum of Vilani technology rather than trying to reverse-engineer a few captured devices.

The Terran political and military leaders grew complacent during the Empty Peace, believing the Terran Confederation could securely hold the territory it controlled and that their military could deter further aggression. They were taken by surprise when a dynamic Vilani provincial governor built up her forces and launched a carefully planned offensive. This Fourth Interstellar War went badly for Terran Confederation, who lost territory and ended up suing for terms in -2346. This was again granted by the Vilani government, who believed they had finally delivered a decisive check to Terran ambition.

Instead, the Terran Confederation embarked on a crash rearmament program. Within three years Terran fleets were on the offensive again, repudiating the terms of the peace treaty and swiftly regaining most of the lost territory in what became the Fifth Interstellar War. Losses due to heavy fighting eventually stopped further Terran advances, resulting in an uneasy peace.

Terra Triumphant

Despite occasional reverses of fortune the Terran Confederation steadily grew in size and power during the Interstellar Wars. Its successes were made possible by political limitations within the structure of the Ziru Sirka. Although the Terran Confederation devoted its entire resources to the war, the Vilani deployed only those ships and troops that were available to the provincial governor – who usually had other concerns. For the first six Interstellar Wars, the central Vilani government was always too distracted managing other problems across its immense empire to consider using its full power to crush the Terran Confederation. The provincial governors, for their part, were reluctant to request assistance in case it made them seem inept or weak. Thus the Terrans fought with all their might against a fraction of the Imperium's strength.

Military power was not the Terran Confederation's only weapon. The Ziru Sirka was at its heart a series of vast corporate bureaucracies built around conservative monopolistic practices. In periods of peace between the wars, Terran free traders and smugglers ranged through the rimward provinces of the empire, disrupting ancient economic systems and establishing relationships with political minorities and non-Vilani races throughout the Imperium. Terran diplomats exploited these relationships, causing social shockwaves that rippled through the empire and winning allies who would provide crucial support in the final struggle. Billions of dissidents seized the opportunity granted by Terran victories to take up arms against their own empire. This fact was often forgotten in later Solomani propaganda, which depicted Terra as fighting alone against the universe.

As the struggle continued, the Vilani provincial government began to lose control over its own territory. The Sixth Interstellar War (-2327) was begun not by the empire but by pirates raiding into the Terran Confederation. This nevertheless provoked a massive Terran response: a full-scale invasion of Vilani space. The loss of two key worlds forced the Vilani provincial government to seek a new peace treaty, in -2321. With major systems now fallen and even the provincial capital at Dingir now under threat, the Vilani provincial government took the unprecedented step of admitting they could no longer handle the Terran problem. They dispatched a delegation to the capital at Vland to request direct assistance from their emperor.

The emperor was slow to respond. Other provinces were causing problems, with the coreward sectors – closer to the capital on Vland – under sustained assault from Vargr raiders. Help eventually arrived in -2317, in the form of several squadrons of Imperial battleships. Their arrival triggered the Seventh Interstellar War but even this powerful force failed to have a decisive impact. In fact, the weakened Vilani provincial economy was barely able to support and repair these reinforcements. The Terran Confederation retaliated by constructing its own capital ships. Despite some initial military successes by the Vilani, a period of stalemate was followed by a strong Terran counterattack over a wide front. The Vilani province was in no state to fight a long war and again suffered humiliating defeat, with half of the Dingir subsector falling to the Terran Confederation. The Seventh Interstellar War ended in -2308 with another armistice.

The Eighth Interstellar War began after the Vilani had mustered sufficient capital ships to attempt another offensive. It failed. Led by their inspired strategist Admiral Manuel Albadawi, Terran Confederation fleets counterattacked in a multi-pronged campaign that cut off their opponent's supply lines and forced the main Vilani fleet to surrender. Encouraged by the Terran successes, the Vegans, a non-human subject race of the Vilani, now rose up in revolt. The Eighth War ended with the Vilani Empire ceding all its provincial territory rimward of Vega to the Terran Confederation and its new ally.

This crushing victory finally forced the central government of the Ziru Sirka to give full attention to Terra. The Vilani Core Fleet, invincible for over 2,000 years, advanced to seek a decisive battle. The Terrans were waiting, with the brilliant Admiral Albadawi once again in overall command. The combined fleets of Terra and Vega slowed the Vilani advance with hit-and-run tactics and then sprang their trap. Terran engineers had recently refitted their ships with two new inventions, jump-3 technology and meson guns. The newer warships of the Terran fleet used their superior strategic mobility to mount a surprise attack and meson gun fire blasted apart the enemy's most powerful warships. The Vilani military suffered the worst disaster of its history, losing 90% of their fleet. This time the Terran Confederation did not accept a Vilani surrender, maintaining a relentless pursuit that destroyed much of the remaining Imperial strength.

This Ninth Interstellar War was an overwhelming victory for the Terran Confederation. The Ziru Sirka abandoned most of what is now the Solomani Rim. From this point on, the Terran Confederation was almost constantly on the offensive, further wars broken off only when the Confederation needed to consolidate its most recent conquests.

As Terran forces advanced out of the Vilani rimward provinces, the theatre of conflict expanded. Peace and war blurred together; new wars would sometimes

break out in distant regions even before the existence of a peace treaty could be communicated to respective capitals. The governing Secretariat of the Terran Confederation, still dominated by the citizens of Earth, also found it increasingly difficult to maintain control of its far-flung colonies. Many were now distinct societies in their own right. They supported the war effort and provided the majority of naval personnel for Confederation fleets but came to resent policies that placed Terra first and seemed out of touch with colonial interests.

Terran society was profoundly affected by two centuries of interstellar war. Although national distinctions remained, citizens gradually came to see themselves as Terrans first and national citizens second. By the time the Interstellar Wars against the Ziru Sirka were over, Terra was a united world operating under a single government, ready to extend its rule beyond its own gravity well and star system. This was a source of both great strength and weakness. A people who still thought of themselves in terms of a single world, however confident and united they were, were ill-prepared to govern a growing confederation of increasingly independent colonies. They were singularly unprepared to rule the Vilani grand empire of stars.

Historians simply refer to the Interstellar Wars after the Ninth by the indeterminate variable N. Regardless of nomenclature the Nth Interstellar War (-2235 to -2219) ended the centuries of conflict with the Ziru Sirka. Terran and allied fleets advanced deep into Vilani territory, reaching as far as the Massilia sector before the empire ultimately collapsed.

THE RULE OF MAN

The fall of the Ziru Sirka after the Nth Interstellar War left the Terrans with a formidable task; one that many historians believe was impossible from the outset. For more than 1,200 years the Vilani had enforced an uneasy peace that kept their many subject systems under centralised political and economic control. Although the price of stability had been cultural rigidity and technological stagnation, the Vilani bureaux had centuries of practice in the art of governing an immense interstellar empire. The administrators of the Terran Confederation were now called upon to take on that role following a scant 200 years of such experience on a far smaller stage, in an economy that had been devastated by war.

The Terran Confederation lacked the structure to even attempt governance. Instead, the Terran Navy tried. Between -2219 and -2204 more than 100,000 Terran Confederation naval officers were sent throughout the defeated Vilani Empire. Their mission was to take control of the reins of government, provide direction to local bureaucracies and bureaux, and to keep the peace. Their numbers were wholly inadequate to the task at hand. Terran ensigns were sometimes assigned to administer entire planets; warship captains who previously commanded nothing larger than a light cruiser were placed in charge of subsectors.

Fortunately, the majority of the exhausted Vilani population readily accepted Terran rule. The Terran Confederation's military forces, who had previously known the Vilani as enemies and competitors, now learned to treat them as partners and sympathise with them as people. Between -2219 and -2204, the Terran Navy worked tirelessly in cooperation with surviving elements of the Vilani bureaucracy to prevent the empire sliding into chaos. With the cooperation and survival of Vilani governmental and mercantile structures they prevented an immediate socio-economic collapse that would have cost untold lives.

Many politicians back on Terra did not appreciate the sheer scale of the Vilani Empire and the challenges the Navy faced in its administration. In -2204, believing the immediate crisis was over, the Terran Secretariat narrowly voted to transfer control of the conquered territories directly to Terra. The Vilani bureaux were ordered dissolved and the empire incorporated into the Terran Confederation as a subject territory. This move threatened to undo all the work that the Terran Navy had done.

The Secretariat's policy was widely denounced as disastrous by political and business leaders in the Terran colonies and even by many opposition politicians on Terra itself. In the Terran Confederation Navy it was seen as a suicide pact. To stave off renewed economic catastrophe and a potential civil war, the supreme commander of Terra's forces, Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, staged a military coup. Supported by the colonials who manned the majority of Terra's fleet, Estigarribia declared the dissolution of the Terran Confederation. Henceforth, both the Terran Confederation and the Vilani Empire would be forged together into a single interstellar state, the Rule of Man, whose government would be dedicated to serving the common interests of all Humaniti.

The new capital of the Rule of Man was Terran Fleet Headquarters at Dingir, seven parsecs from Terra. However, the bureaucratic centre of the empire initially remained on Vland, deep in the heart of the former Vilani Empire. The Rule of Man formally recognised that Vilani institutions would be preserved within a Terran-led government.

Terrans Become Solomani

The term Solomani first appeared in history at the beginning of the Rule of Man. It is traced to a holographic recording made by Admiral Estigarribia in which he addressed the people of the Vilani worlds in their own language, to introduce his new regime and its ideals. In searching for a Vilani-resonant term that referred to humans from Earth, the Admiral decided not to use Terran, tied as it was to the Terran Confederation that had just overcome them. 'Terran' had also lost favour with colonials, who no longer accepted central control by the mother planet.

The word he used instead, Solomani, can variously be interpreted as Men of Sol, the Only Men, Sole Men or even All Men. From context in his speech, the Admiral may have meant a more inclusive All Men. However, in popular usage it became accepted during the Rule of Man as a synonym for the branch of Humaniti that had evolved on Terra and expanded through the stars, now distinct from the world and inhabitants of Terra itself. Similarly, the sector containing Terra, Vega and the old Vilani Rim province that the Terran Confederation had battled would become known as the Solomani Rim.

The Imperial Tradition and the Solomani Migration

Estigarribia was an autocrat in all but name. The military-led Rule of Man swept away Terra's tradition of republican government at the interstellar level. Earth's pre-star flight history had a rich tradition of accepting dictators and kings; the Vilani wanted another emperor and the Terran military wanted one of their own in charge. When Estigarribia died, he was succeeded by his chief of staff, who crowned himself Emperor Hiroshi II. He transferred governmental functions from Vland and Dingir to Hub in the Ershur subsector, in the more centrally located Massilia sector. This world, later renamed Khaggushus, would remain the capital of the Rule of Man over the next four centuries.

The first centuries of the Rule of Man were marked by waves of Solomani emigrants who left Terra and its older colonies and spread throughout the Vilani worlds. They came as administrators, bureaucrats, consultants, engineers, leaders and scientists. They found themselves struggling with the same problems of size and stagnation that had fatally weakened the Ziru Sirka. The Vilani had achieved stability through a rigid caste system. The Solomani destroyed the old ways but failed to establish a true social foundation to replace it. On some worlds the Solomani simply became a new amateur governing caste, with Vilani rigid social hierarchies translated into old Earth titles of nobility. On others, a hybrid society slowly evolved and Solomani emigrants were partially absorbed into the older, and in some ways richer, Vilani culture they found themselves submerged in.

Not all Solomani experienced such assimilation, however. Terra and its older colonies retained their Earth-derived culture, barely modified by Vilani contact. Throughout the entire Interstellar Wars period and much of the Rule of Man, these worlds continued to send expeditions discover and settle on worlds that the Vilani themselves had never visited. They were scattered in a wide arc to rimward of the old borders of the Ziru Sirka and many had been founded by groups that deliberately sought independence.

The creation of the Rule of Man had forced the dissolution of the Terran Confederation but Terra remained an influential and wealthy world and strong bonds still existed between the mother planet and her original colonies. In -1690, Terra and her nearest colonies formed a loose corporate trade association, the Terran Mercantile Community. The Rule of Man prohibited its members from building private interstellar navies. The Terran Mercantile Community circumvented these restrictions by building a merchant fleet that trod a fine line between commercial ships and naval vessels. The ships carried enough armament to protect themselves from pirates and raiders but not enough to classify them as naval vessels. Even as its political importance declined, the merchant fleet made Terra and the other member worlds in the TMC a formidable commercial force. Its merchant adventurers ranged far beyond the worlds of the TMC, keeping in sporadic contact with some of the outposts of Solomani settlement outside the Rule of Man.

SOLOMANI IN THE LONG NIGHT

Many historians see the Rule of Man as stillborn. The transfusion of Solomani blood into Vilani society may have prevented collapse for four centuries but could not fix a terminal disease. The Vilani Empire might have lingered for centuries more but the shock of Terran conquest was too great. After 2,000 years, despite the best and worst efforts of its citizens, the collapse of interstellar civilisation was unstoppable. The Twilight of a pending dark age was followed by a Long Night.

Decline was apparent as early as -1900, with parts of the empire falling into a multi sector recession. Attempts to patch the system slowed but did not arrest the economic and social problems. They merely made the final collapse more sudden and total. In -1776 the central treasury at Hub refused to honour a monetary issue of the branch treasury at Antares. The resulting loss of confidence in the basic financial systems underpinning large-scale interstellar commerce signified the beginning of the end.

The collapse of the financial system of the central Rule of Man government signalled the beginning of a new dark age for the peoples subject to them. Net growth of industrial output throughout the entire Rule of Man became negative. Factories closed more rapidly than new ones could open. The empire broke into factions led by rival emperors and admirals with competing claims, adding the scourge of war and fragmenting the Navy's fleets. As authority broke down, interstellar trading ships and isolated worlds were regularly menaced by pirates and rogue navies that were pirates in all but name. Eventually there was so little commerce that not even piracy could be sustained.

The chief result of the Long Night was to cut off interstellar communication and trade. Worlds were isolated on their own or in tiny groups with close stellar neighbours. Technology levels declined. The great fleets of the Terran Navy and Vilani Empire could no longer be repaired and were cannibalised for spare parts.

Even as the Rule of Man withered, other alien races moved into the vacuum left by its implosion. To spinward and coreward, the Zhodani and alien Vargr gradually expanded their own spheres of influence. Aslan explorers and traders wandered through the rimward sectors of the former Rule of Man territory, sometimes coming into contact or conflict with isolated far-flung Solomani colonies. First contacts were made between exploring Hivers and the Solomani worlds (in -1802) and with the K'kree (in -200).

Solomani populations did as well as most during the early Twilight years and suffered less than some in the Long Night. Isolation caused significant cultural drift in many cases but in others it helped preserve the traditions of Old Earth. On worlds settled entirely by Solomani, this often meant that echoes of Terran ethnic cultures and languages survived for longer than they would have if the worlds had remained part of a cosmopolitan interstellar state. On those worlds where Solomani had settled among Vilani or other non-Terran populations, they became more immersed in local customs and culture and often intermarried with them. Exceptions were typically members of the ruling class, who sometimes held themselves aloof.

Terra itself was a naturally rich and hospitable planet, so its inhabitants were affected far less than worlds that depended on imported goods or resources. As interstellar trade collapsed there was economic hardship but the Terran Mercantile Community still had a star fleet to patrol its systems and to replace the Rule of Man navy. The TMC's armed merchant fleet cushioned the blow of the Long Night and left Terra to survive in relative comfort and even maintain a small trading community extending over about 10 parsecs. Later in the Long Night, the Terran Mercantile Community took over political responsibilities. In -1110 it reorganised into an interstellar state known as the Old Earth Union. Other Solomani splinter states of the Rule of Man also emerged in this period. Two of those in the Solomani Rim were the Easter Concord and the Dingir League.

Similar small interstellar communities were created in the Long Night by other human and non-human governments but each kept more or less to itself. Between those governments' borders was a lawless waste open to piracy and raiding by any who ventured into it. Many worlds regressed to a pre-star flight level and some planetary populations collapsed into barbarism or died out. Others established small pocket empires, often controlled by degraded remnants of the Rule of Man's military forces.

Solomani and the Aslan Border Wars

If the Long Night was a dark age for Solomani and Vilani, it was a renaissance for the Aslan. Like the Terrans, they were latecomers to the game of empire. They benefited from the power vacuum left behind by the conquest of the Ziru Sirka and the collapse of the Rule of Man.

Between -1180 until c. 380, the Solomani colonies that had been established far from Terra in the Iwahfuah, Reaver's Deep, Dark Nebula, Ustral Quadrant and Magyar sectors came under increasing pressure from the expanding Aslan. This was not a conflict of one huge empire against another. Instead, independent land-hungry Aslan clans fought, schemed against and allied with tiny Human pocket empires that had been isolated by distance and the Long Night from the rest of humanity. Some Solomani colonies took on Aslan Ihatei as mercenary soldiers, trading land for protection. Aslan also provided aid to migratory Solomani groups, such as the Sword World colonists, who sought passage into and through Aslan territory to settle in more distant reaches of Charted Space.

The fortunes of the competing races waxed and waned but over time the Aslan gradually absorbed or assimilated the old Solomani colonies in Iwahfuah and most of those in the Dark Nebula and Ustral Quadrant. Solomani continued to resist the Aslan tide in the Reaver's Deep and Magyar sectors.

SOLOMANI AND THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The end of the Long Night happened in different places at different times. For some non-human races, such as the Aslan, it was not a night at all but rather a shining period of cultural renaissance. There were false dawns as worlds reached out to the stars again, only to encounter difficulties or exhaust themselves and retreat back into isolationism.

A new human interstellar civilisation first successfully coalesced around the Sylean Federation in the Core sector. Its capital, Sylea, was a world with a mixed Vilani and Solomani population, retaining an aristocratic system of government linked to the traditions of the Rule of Man. Under the dynamic leadership of Cleon Zhunastu, a nobleman and industrialist, the Federation extended its borders with amazing speed. The traditional combination of naval and economic power was sufficient to secure control over nearby worlds but Cleon knew very well that an interstellar state needed more than power to endure. It needed an identity.

Cleon Zhunastu would have to do more than create a framework to govern the worlds he now controlled and he was aided in this by a fortunate accident of history. In the latter days of the Rule of Man, rival emperors had set up bases on various worlds, one of which was Sylea. This imperial fragment was no more or less legitimate than any other but it provided a link to the Rule of Man and thence to the Vilani Imperium.

Drawing legitimacy from this link, Cleon crowned himself Cleon I of the Third Imperium. His was not a new empire, he claimed, but the continuation of the previous ones. Adept use of symbology created resonance in the minds of the citizens, who for the most part welcomed the idea of a revived Imperium. The coronation year was declared as Year Zero of a new Imperial calendar and after 30 years of expansion the Sylean Federation was transformed into the basis of a new empire. Its citizens were inspired by Zhunastu propaganda to expect a golden age of growth and expansion, returning civilisation to the stars. Any ruler could have sold that message but such was the talent of Cleon I and the enthusiasm of those who followed him that it became a reality.

The new Imperium, like the Sylean Federation and the Rule of Man before it, was built on a foundation of a Solomani aristocracy. However, less emphasis was placed on race and bloodline than on loyalty, ability and wealth. It was nominally egalitarian despite the prevalence of individuals with Solomani ancestry in the upper levels of social, government and economic hierarchies throughout the Imperium. Citizens began to call themselves Imperials and intermarriage between Vilani and Solomani, especially in the ordinary middle classes, was very common.

Reintegration of Solomani Worlds

Unlike the Rule of Man, the early Third Imperium was expansionist. Its newly formed Imperial Interstellar Scout Service ranged far and wide from Sylea in all directions. Their first explorers reached the Solomani Rim as early as 100 and were pleased to discover the Solomani homeworld Terra had survived the Long Night with its civilisation intact.

At this point in time the Solomani Hypothesis that Terra was the original homeworld of all Humaniti had been introduced by Imperial scholars led by Magis haut-Devroe, although at the time they worked only from secondary sources. Since the new Third Imperium traced its legitimacy to the Rule of Man, this was of political, as well as academic, interest and widespread Solomani influence in the nobility further increased its credibility.

As capital of the Old Earth Union, Terra was just one of several Rim states that existed within the bounds of the old Terran Confederation; others included the Easter Concord and Dingir League. Similar but smaller Solomani states existed in neighbouring sectors, such as the Consolidation of Turin and Protectorate of Cthonia within Alpha Crucis. By 200 most of the worlds of the Solomani Rim were trading among themselves and sporadically with a few far-ranging Imperial merchants.

These Rim States were a great prize for the Imperium, collectively possessing greater populations, economic power and military strength than the pocket empires it had previously absorbed. Beyond this, Terra itself remained a potent symbol; its peaceful integration into the Third Imperium would be another sign of its power and legitimacy as the one true successor of the Ziru Sirka and the Rule of Man. Unfortunately, assimilation was complicated. The Easter Concord had retained the aristocratic social system of the Rule of Man but the Old Earth Union and Dingir League, among others, had more republican and democratic social structures. Rule by a hereditary nobility and an emperor – even if planetary freedom was guaranteed – did not sit well with their populations.

Intense diplomatic, economic and public relations pressure were applied to the Rim States but this effort was interrupted by other difficulties. It was not until 426 that the Easter Concord accepted Imperial membership. Terra did not join until 588, via a popular referendum that dissolved the Old Earth Union and accepted Imperial rule. Solomani states in Alpha Crucis and Magyar joined soon afterward following Terra's example. Some distant Solomani worlds in regions beyond Terra continued to remain independent. Terra's entry into the Imperium also allowed Imperial scholars to visit it where they quickly confirmed haut-Devroe's Solomani Hypothesis.

In the midst of its diplomatic effort to win over the Rim States, the Imperium ran into further Solomani-centred problems. The Scout Service discovered the existence of the Solomani pocket empires that lay beyond the spinward borders of the old Ziru Sirka in the Reaver's Deep and Dark Nebula. These isolated Solomani colonies were still embroiled in the on-again, off-again struggle of the Aslan Border Wars. The beleaguered colonials of the Reaver's Deep, under siege by increasingly powerful Hierate clans, agreed to Imperial hegemony in exchange for military protection.

One-sided encounters with the huge warships and superior military technology of the Imperium eventually forced the Aslan clans to negotiate the Peace of Ftahalr in 380. This treaty ended the Aslan Border Wars, establishing a 30-parsec buffer zone between the two powers. The Peace was not welcomed by all Solomani colonials. Many would have preferred a more aggressive Imperial policy and were disappointed that the Imperium did not carry the war into Aslan space to regain their lost territory. Due to lacklustre Imperial support, some Solomani worlds within Magyar refused to join the Imperium.

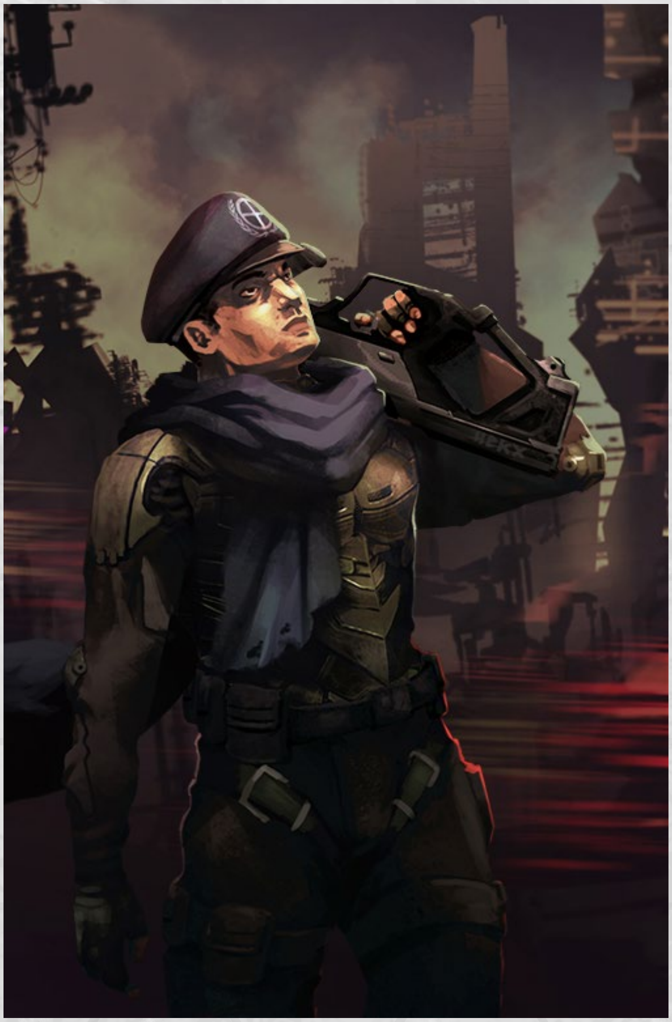
Rise of the Solomani Movement

In the early 600s there was evidence that the social structure of the Imperium was in jeopardy. The last five centuries had been a time of expansion but this also imposed the familiar limitations on the ability of the central Imperial government to control its periphery. The power of Sector Dukes grew as more territory was added to the Imperium and the Admirals of the Marches expanded the size of their fleets to deal with external threats such as the Zhodani Consulate and the Vargr Extents.

In 606, at the end of the First Frontier War with the Zhodani, Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell led his fleet from the Spinward Marches to the Core, plunging the Imperium into civil war. He assassinated Empress Jacqueline and was proclaimed Emperor. Plankwell was the first of the Emperors of the Flag, a sequence of Imperial admirals who each attempted to seize the Iridium Throne. Those who succeeded did not last long and were quickly replaced by another pretender.

This era of bitter internecine strife threatened to unravel the social fabric of the Imperium. The chaos and suffering brought about by the Civil Wars weakened trust in the legitimacy of the Solomani economic and political interests that still dominated its court and military.

A resurgent bloc of culturally Vilani megacorporations argued for an end to rapid military expansion and a return to the political stability of the corporate-dominated era of the Ziru Sirka. This new breed of Vilani nobles and industrialists began to offer a serious challenge to the Solomani aristocracy. Other citizens, especially in Solomani-settled regions where Vilani ideals had less appeal, began to lose faith in the concept of an autocratic empire itself.



Solomani populists argued that the Imperial form of government was flawed; the idea of a star empire ruled by an emperor was an inherently Vilani concept. The Solomani had outgrown the era of aristocratic monarchy during the pre-space flight era. These Constitutionalists advocated the replacement of the Imperium with a constitutional monarchy, with the Imperial Moot transformed into a functional legislative parliament. The Confederation Movement, often called the Devolutionists, went further, arguing that the emperor and the nobility should be replaced by subsector, sector and Imperium-wide assemblies. This concept was widely considered to be tantamount to treason. It was completely unacceptable to Solomani nobility but gained traction among many ordinary citizens of cultural Solomani background. Arguments that it was unworkable were countered by reference to the failure of past Imperial governments, notably the Rule of Man.

The Solomani Movement initially consisted of such populists, who drew inspiration from the success of the old Terran Confederation as well as later successors like the Terran Mercantile Combine and the Old Earth Union. The Terran Confederation had lasted for centuries without civil war, only to collapse when it attempted to absorb the Vilani Empire and the other minor races. The Movement argued that failure lay not in the idea of a confederation itself but in inherent incompatibilities between Solomani culture on the one hand and those of the Vilani and other non-Solomani human races on the other. Stated baldly, Solomani civilisation had exceptional qualities the others lacked. This concept sowed the ideological seeds of a more virulent form of Solomani nationalism.

Many Solomani felt squeezed by the increasing influence of large Vilani-style megacorporations but they still dominated Imperial politics and controlled the upper ranks of the Imperial Navy. The Civil War era came to a dramatic end when Admiral Arbellatra Alkhalikoi, a Solomani, achieved victory in the Second Frontier War over the Outworld Coalition of Zhodani and Vargr. As had happened before, she led a battle-hardened fleet back into the interior. Her forces defeated Gustav, the most recent emperor to seize the throne. Unlike her predecessors, Arbellatra did not claim that throne herself. Instead she appointed herself Regent.

The opportunity may have existed for Arbellatra to end the Imperium and establish a confederation, as Solomani populists desired but there is no evidence that she held such views, which were in any case rare among Imperial Navy officers. Such a move would have undermined her own legitimacy and weakened the power of the very coalition of Solomani soldiers and nobles that supported her. Instead, after several years holding the regency while establishing a reputation for good government, Arbellatra allowed the nobility to proclaim her emperor.

The Vilani noble houses, many of which controlled megacorporations, did their best to stay out of the political and military struggles of the Civil War. They focused instead on promoting economic growth and stable government in coreward regions of the Imperium. Following Arbellatra's victory, these Vilani houses actively supported her and were first among those who urged her to take the throne. Arbellatra's court, initially pro-Solomani, eventually turned into a political battleground between Vilani and Solomani power blocs.

Solomani Superiority and the Solomani Cause

The coronation of Arbellatra saw the Solomani Movement reach its first peak. The Confederationist arguments mustered by populist elements of the Solomani Movement had failed to resonate with the newly triumphant Solomani aristocracy and military. Why dissolve the Imperium if a Solomani was empress? However, newer concepts of inherent Solomani exceptionalism found fertile ground among aristocrats, the military and many ordinary citizens of Solomani descent. These adherents came to believe that pure original racial humans of Terra, the Solomani, were superior to other humans and thus better entitled to rule the Imperium. Solomani were the original, true, human beings. Complex sociological explanations of the differences between Vilani and Solomani governmental traditions were less important to them than the raw concept of Solomani superiority.

According to this new theory, the Solomani were the first or true men. All other humans were inferior offshoots, culturally backward in their ideas. The racial argument was supported by historical precedent: the ease with which the Terran Confederation defeated the vastly larger Vilani Empire; the rapid progress that led to the development of new technology such as meson weapons and jump-3 drives; the rebirth and expansion of the Imperium under Terran stewardship to a size greater than that of the Ziru Sirka at its height; the triumphs of Arbellatra over the Zhodani and Vargr coalition.

Radical adherents went further. The Solomani Cause, as it became to be known, renounced the Rule of Man as a legitimate source of power, claiming its failure was due to its rejection of the pre-eminence of mother Terra. Hiroshi I and his successors, who had adopted a Vilani-tainted system of Imperial government, were traitors to their race who had wrongfully retained the Vilani bureaucracy and megacorporations. They had tried to integrate the Terran and Vilani systems rather than replacing them. The fact that the Terran Confederation lacked the infrastructure and manpower to hold the conquered sectors without co-opting existing Vilani power structure was ignored. Radicals argued emotionally that the attempt had not been properly tried; Terra had overcome such long odds before, had she not?

Criticism of the Rule of Man, or Second Imperium, could be seen as questioning the very legitimacy of the Third Imperium as its natural successor state. This flirted dangerously with anti-Imperial rhetoric. With a proven empress of Solomani blood on the throne and their continued influence in the Imperial court, the mainstream Solomani Movement was not quite prepared to embrace radical Confederationist philosophies.

This lasted until Arbellatra's son Zhakirov became emperor in 666. He chose to take a Vilani woman as his empress – and all the comforting Solomani Movement rationales that had supported Imperial power suddenly came crashing down.

Solomani Alienation

When Emperor Zhakirov succeeded Arbellatra in 666, the Solomani success at court lost some of its lustre. The economic and political stability that had come to the Imperium with the end of the Civil Wars strengthened the megacorporations. Their power increased relative to both the nobility and to individual worlds. In 679, Zhakirov recognised this when he married Antiama Shiishuginsa, whose family controlled the powerful Vilani megacorporation Zirunkariish.

Previous emperors of the Third Imperium had all been pure Solomani. Zhakirov's marriage broke the power of Solomani aristocracy at court and ensured that future lines would be of mixed Vilani-Solomani blood. It also cemented an alliance between the Imperium and the megacorporations which would endure throughout the history of the Third Imperium. It may have stabilised the Imperium by ensuring Vilani support. It certainly added greatly to both the personal wealth of the emperor and to the political power of the resurgent Vilani industrialists.

This new alliance alienated believers in the Solomani Movement. From this point onward, they took an increasingly anti-Imperial tone, combining the appeal of Solomani exceptionalism with the Confederationist desire to create an alternative system of interstellar government no longer subject to the dictates of a single emperor.

The power base of the Solomani Movement was in the rimward sectors of the Imperium, especially in the Solomani Rim, Alpha Crucis, Magyar and Aldebaran, which had become a hotbed of Confederationist political views. Solomani Parties espousing the Movement's philosophy began to achieve political power on worlds in this region. At first local affairs, they developed interstellar political networks that existed outside of the normal channels of Imperial power. Solomani corporate interests in these sectors helped fund them, as they also favoured an aggressive policy of rimward expansion. With the emperor's court and Vilani megacorporations preferring consolidation and stable borders to frontier development, such policies received little Imperial support. Solomani corporations and planetary governments in the rimward sectors increasingly found they could no longer rely on the Imperial Navy and Scout Service's assistance in opening up new territories and markets or taking their part over non-human states such as the Vegans.

Despite Solomani allegations to the contrary, the reigns of Zhakirov and his successor Margaret I did not openly favour Zirunkariish or other Vilani megacorporations. However, they did promote economic, legal and regulatory policies that strongly supported every Imperial megacorporation. This policy strengthened the economy of the Imperium as a whole but there were losers as well as winners. In the post-Civil War era, individual worlds and subsector or planetary businesses increasingly lost both political power and market share to the ever-expanding tentacles of huge Imperium-wide conglomerates. Although many of these companies were of Solomani origin, their interests were increasingly aligned with the entire Imperium rather than particular regions or cultures. Senior managers of companies like Ling Standard Products or SuSAG had neither sympathy nor interest in the Solomani Movement, which from their perspective was a reactionary and provincial ideology that could undermine hard-won stability.

Subsector-wide and planetary business interests held different attitudes. In the sectors surrounding Terra, their customers often shared a pro Solomani worldview and they themselves had increasing difficulties competing with megacorporations, especially when these leviathans were closely aligned with both the Imperial Family and a resurgent Vilani nobility. To balance the power of the megacorporations, worlds that elected

Solomani Party governments found it in their interests to court sector-wide and subsector-level Solomani-owned corporations and shut out megacorporations. Imperial regulations prohibited protectionist practices in interstellar trade but this was not necessarily the case at the planetary level. In exchange for favourable treatment, these regional and planetary companies began to provide financial support for the nascent Solomani Movement. One of the leaders of this approach was Transstar, a subsector-sized transport line that would use Solomani Movement patronage to significantly expand its influence.

In 685, delegates representing Solomani Movement political parties that had achieved power on various worlds in the Solomani Rim and neighbouring sectors gathered on Terra in the first great Solomani Party Congress. They were accompanied by representatives from many pro-Solomani non-governmental organisations. These interests included such groups as the Solomani Students Society, the Rim Coalition for Social and Racial Justice, the Near Boötes Business Association, the Church of the First Cross, Alpha Crucis Committee for a Solomani Society, Citizens for a New Terran Union, the Confederation Study Group, the Rim Traders Alliance and the League of Solomani Veterans. Additional support and funding for the Congress came from pro-Solomani businesses, chief among them the rising merchant corporation Transstar, which had offered discounted travel arrangements for many delegates. This first Party Congress, which lasted just over a year, resulted in the formal establishment of a set of Solomani Party principals and political objectives.

Although the Solomani Party's official platform itself was somewhat conservative, racist and militant tendencies were also on the rise. Over the next few decades, the organised Solomani Party became increasingly involved on an interstellar level in planetary conflicts. It used its resources to support the struggles of pro-Solomani political groups, either directly by providing militant volunteers and hiring mercenaries or through its own allied corporations. Solomani Party money and ideology increasingly injected itself into conflicts between rival local regimes and corporations. Mercenaries funded by Solomani Party-controlled worlds or their corporate surrogates sometimes came into conflict with those hired by non-Solomani governments and the megacorporations that supported them.

Imperial forces were sometimes drawn into these conflicts, especially when fighting impinged on the extrality zones of starports within the Solomani Rim. As the region fractured on racial lines, the extrality zones of starports often became fortresses or ghettos where non Solomani minorities and megacorporation employees were increasingly concentrated under the armed protection of mercenaries or Imperial troops. The Solomani Party increasingly portrayed starports as bastions of megacorporate imperialism and noble privilege and referred to them as 'zones of Imperial occupation'.

How to handle 'the Solomani problem' became a perennial issue in noble circles, which only served to feed the growing anti-Imperial sentiment on the Rim. Corporate military intervention through hired mercenaries was nothing unusual in the Imperium but an interstellar political party supporting such actions across multiple sectors was unprecedented. It could be seen as violating the spirit if not the letter of the Imperial Rules of War, which sought to outlaw warfare between member worlds of the Imperium. The Imperial court began to take notice of this strain of Solomani activism and loyalist nobles and anti-Solomani megacorporations began throwing money and mercenaries at the problem.

THE SOLOMANI AUTONOMOUS REGION

The Solomani Movement was out of favour in court and its ideas seemed radical to many Imperial citizens. At the same time, it was also a powerful force that could no longer be ignored. In 702, Empress Margaret I agreed to meet with moderate leaders of the Solomani Party Congress in order to defuse tensions and placate the more vocal spokesmen for the Solomani Cause. Then in 704, in what was widely perceived as capitulation to Solomani demands, the Empress granted an Imperial charter creating the Solomani Autonomous Region. This was a sphere of space 100 parsecs in diameter that was centred on Terra, giving the region its popular name – the Solomani Sphere.

The creation of the Solomani Sphere was intended as a sop to the Solomani Movement, whose political and business leaders became the new rulers of the region. The Imperium retained theoretical sovereignty but real power within the region was placed in the hands of the Solomani Party and its political allies. Hereditary noble titles were not abolished, nor were fiefs of Solomani nobles who supported the Movement confiscated. However, the nobility in the Solomani Autonomous Region quickly lost their status as representatives of the interstellar level of government. These positions were taken over by various committees; initially by regional, subsector- and sector-level Solomani Party congresses and later by more formal bodies. However, many Solomani nobles did use their wealth and influence to achieve early positions of leadership within the Party; others discovered the growing anti-Imperial bias of the Solomani Movement translated into anti aristocratic prejudice and chose exile. Those noble houses that actively resisted the growth of the Movement were often subject to persecution by Solomani Party militants.

The Imperium ceded its formal jurisdiction over the region's starports but Imperial Navy and Scout bases remained under sovereign control. As a result, the Autonomous Region was not entirely autonomous, at least not to begin with. Trade relations and technological exchanges continued. The Imperium still claimed formal sovereignty over the space between its stars. It reserved the right to send Imperial military forces into the region and manage foreign policy, even in conflicts between alien client states and its Solomani citizens. The Imperial Treasury taxed the citizens of the Solomani Sphere, despite the Imperium having turned its back on its rimward frontier. Friction was inevitable.

The nativist movement in the Solomani Sphere did not come into being in isolation. In fact, the period from 800–850 saw the rise of xenophobia throughout the entire Imperium. In the spinward and coreward regions, it manifested in the Psionics Suppressions and fear of Zhodani infiltration. To rimward, in the Solomani Autonomous District, it took the form of increasing nationalist and racist sentiment. The Solomani Autonomous Region, on the whole, did not share the psi-inspired panic over Zhodani spies. Indeed, Terra's psionic institute largely escaped any persecution – but for various reasons non-humans and non-Solomani humans were viewed with increasing suspicion.

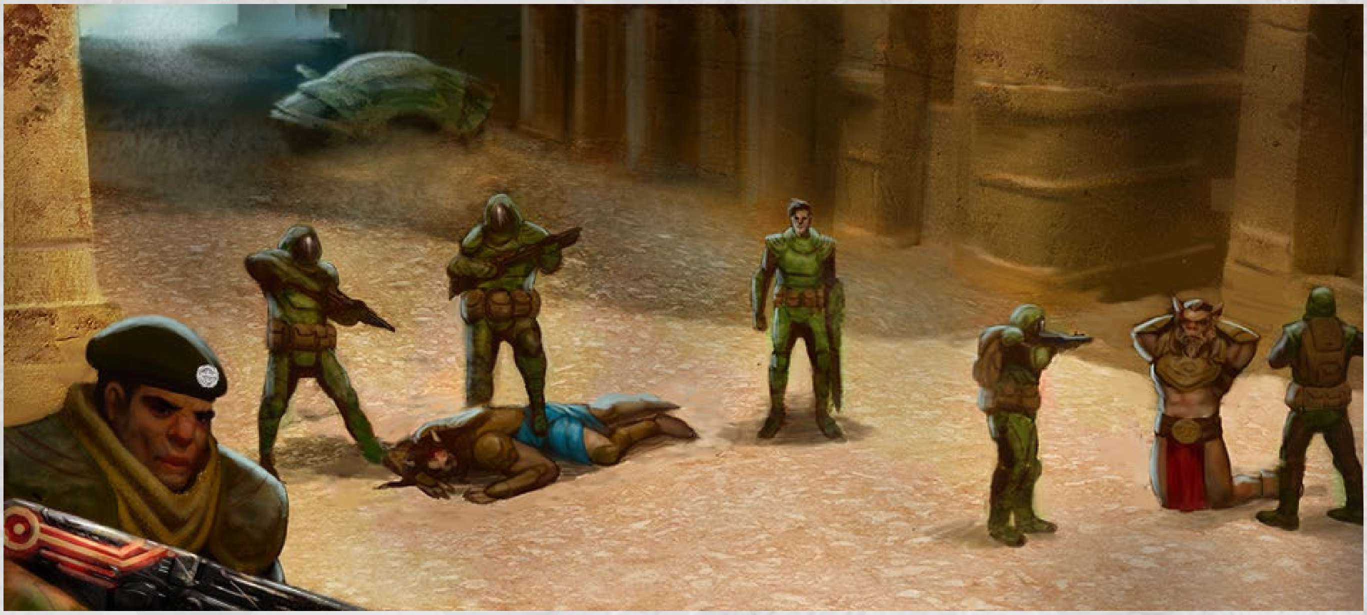
As Solomani corporations and settlers expanded into their rimward frontier, they resisted opening these worlds up to Imperial settlement by non-Solomani humans or aliens. The inhabitants of Magyar and the Dark Nebula remembered how the Imperium had refused to press its advantage to regain the worlds that had fallen to the Aslan, accepting peace instead. The Solomani were determined not to allow any frontier worlds in Canopus, Aldebaran and Neworld to fall into the orbits of either the Aslan or Hivers or be carved up for the benefit of Imperial megacorporations or nobles.

This was symptomatic of the growing disdain that the Solomani felt toward the Imperium and Imperial institutions. The Charter of the Solomani Autonomous Region limited the influence of the Imperial Bureaucracy and in particular the Imperial Colonial Office. However, both the Imperial Navy and the Scout Service continued to operate in the Autonomous Region. The Scout Service's operation of the x-boat network was appreciated but its practice of interdicting new worlds to protect developing cultures, primitive minor races or fragile ecosystems was seen as getting in the way of the pro-expansion ideology of the Solomani Movement. In particular, Solomani businesses and colonists claimed the Scout Service bureaucracy's interdiction process was subject to manipulation by Imperial megacorporations, who could get certain worlds exempted from Red Zone status. This dispute came to a head in the Red Zone Affair.

Left to itself, Solomani political theory had grown more chauvinistic; in part, this served to justify their colonial policies on the rimward, spinward and trailing frontiers, where they were directly competing with the Aslan and Hive Federation. This was combined with a cavalier attitude toward the rights of those minor non-human races that Solomani settlers were encountering on the rimward frontier. These primitive indigenous races or 'prindigs' as Solomani colonial offices classified them, were species that never been contacted by the Vilani Empire or the Rule of Man and which existed outside the bounds of the Imperium. They also tended to occupy valuable planetary real estate. This led to direct conflict between polices of the Imperium and the Solomani Autonomous Region

The Imperial Scout Service had no formal control over the territories beyond the Imperial frontier but nevertheless maintained a presence there. It recommended that Red Zone interdictions be imposed on a number of garden worlds in Aldebaran, Canopus, Neworld and Alpha Crucis, notably the homeworld of the Kwaz (or 'Chuckies'), a threatened minor prindig race. The Solomani Colonial Office ignored these recommendations and the Kwaz homeworld was fully opened to Solomani settlement. Next year, in 857, the Imperial Scout Service's Communications Office opposed on budgetary grounds a popular and well-funded initiative to extend high-speed communications routes into frontier districts in Aldebaran. Solomani Party politicians and their media supporters denounced this as Imperial sabotage of the Sphere's aspirations, implying it was retaliation for the Solomani Colonial Office's unwillingness to accede to its interdiction polices.

The Red Zone Affair was just one example of the many jurisdictional clashes that occurred in the 800s. Potentially more serious was the situation developing on the 'Lion's Mane' – the Aslan border region that abutted on the Solomani Autonomous region's spinward frontier. Subsector governments dominated by Solomani



Party regimes began using their new autonomy to forge alliances with and then absorb independent Solomani states in the Dark Nebula and Ustral Quadrant. These newly-strengthened polities began 'liberating' worlds in the Aslan buffer zone in violation of Peace of Ftahalr and other long-standing agreements. Solomani Autonomous Region forces fought over three dozen border skirmishes with Aslan clans between 705 and 870 including the year-long War of Kimson's Stand (832) that redrew the borders in the Dark Nebula in Solomani favour.

The Solomani Autonomous Region's quasi-independent status created friction due to differing interpretations of its duties and privileges. In theory, the Solomani were not supposed to exercise their own foreign policy. In practice, the Imperium wanted to keep the peace on the Aslan border while the Solomani sought to provide military aid to their brethren outside the Imperium and in so doing expand the reach of the Solomani Movement. Imperial Naval forces in the region found themselves ordered not to intervene as Solomani colonial navy squadrons struck into Aslan space, only to be called into action to defend Imperial worlds against Aslan retaliatory raids. The situation was becoming untenable. In 835 Empress Paula II ordered the Imperial Navy to pull back entirely from the Dark Nebula, Canopus and Ustral, leaving defence there entirely to Solomani colonial fleets.

Similar conflicts occurred on the domestic front. Most Solomani worlds had by 850 replaced much of the Imperial structure of government with their own Party-run institutions yet still paid revenues into the Imperial treasury. Much of this went to support Imperial services they no longer trusted. If agencies like the Scout Service or the Navy did not serve the Solomani Cause, what good were they?

During the mid-850s, leading intellectuals and politicians in the Solomani Party argued that their Autonomous Region was paying Imperial taxes without receiving useful Imperial services. On the other hand, the Imperial court was unwilling to extend benefits to a restive region whose population rejected its sovereignty and whose philosophy now challenged its very legitimacy. Radical Solomani leaders and Party-dominated media charged that Solomani worlds, once the bedrock of the Imperium, were being treated as if they were client states, of no more account than minor alien races like the Vegans.

In 860 a delegation of moderate Solomani leaders travelled to the Imperial court, where they failed to secure further concessions and indeed were refused any direct meetings with emperor Tomutova II. Negotiations sputtered on at the sector level for a few more years but by then popular sentiment in the Solomani Sphere had turned increasingly anti-Imperial. In 864, the Solomani Party Congress voted to begin preparations for possible unilateral secession, including the drafting of a constitution and the creation of various national institutions. Many believed this to be a bluff intended to force an Imperial concessions; however, when these concessions never materialised, the process had too much momentum to stop.

BIRTH OF THE CONFEDERATION

On 45–871 on Terra, the Solomani Party Congress of the Solomani Autonomous Region met and formally announced that its member worlds would be reorganising into the Solomani Confederation. Its capital would be Terra. This was effectively a declaration of independence and was recognised as such throughout the Solomani Sphere. The Solomani Movement chose that name in an attempt to strengthen its claims to the heritage of the old Terran Confederation. They also adopted many of the old Terran Confederation and Old Earth Union's governmental forms. Member governments sent representatives to a governing council, the Secretariat, and they elected a Secretary General and cabinet to hold executive power. The first Secretary General of the Confederation was the respected political scientist and Solomani Party activist Noah Kwan, president of the highly-politicised University of Terra.

The Solomani Confederation was not recognised by the government of the Imperium but nor did the Imperium oppose its creation with anything more substantive than diplomatic protest. The Imperium's position was that the government of the Solomani Autonomous Region was merely engaging in an administration reorganisation and bureaucratic overreach, which, for political reasons, the Imperium did not intend to contest at this time. For their part, Secretary General Kwan and the other Confederation leaders were at first unwilling to openly challenge the Imperium and gave assurances that they still respected Imperial sovereignty in matters such as mutual defence. Nevertheless, the creation of the Solomani Confederation resulted in the formal replacement of all sector and subsector levels of the Imperial bureaucracy with government ministries controlled by the Solomani. The transition was relatively smooth. Often the very same offices continued to run under Confederation jurisdiction. Solomani Party loyalists, all of who were of Solomani extraction, typically replaced senior management.

Yet there were obvious changes. Over time, non-Solomani throughout all levels of the bureaucracy were removed, mainly through early retirement, normal attrition or biased hiring practices. In 875, a visitor could still often find a Bwap or Vilani working as a record clerk or manager; by 925 the new Confederation bureaucracy was entirely made up of Solomani humans – and they were all members of the Solomani Party.

The formal creation of the Solomani Confederation also stripped the last remaining subsector nobility of their powers. The Secretariat stated it had assumed the powers of the vacant high nobility positions and that this also gave it executive control over Imperial Armed Forces operating within the Solomani Autonomous Region. This was disputed by the Imperium, which held that the Confederation did not legally exist.

The attempted annexation of Imperial assets came close to starting a war. The Imperium could pretend the Solomani Confederation had not seceded so long as certain boundaries were not pushed but attempting to take control of military forces was unacceptable. In an effort to defuse the situation without overtly giving in, the order was given to undertake a 'major rationalisation of assets'. Ships and personnel were to be withdrawn into Imperial space 'for reassignment', whilst bases were to be closed until they were once again needed. There was hope in Imperial circles that leaving the so-called Solomani Confederation defenceless and removing its Scout Service-operated communications apparatus would demonstrate its unviability.

The exodus of Imperial Navy and Scout Service vessels from Solomani space was turned into a propaganda triumph by the Solomani, who portrayed it was 'kicking the Imperials out of our systems'. However, it had been hoped that the Confederation would be able to keep at least a proportion of the assets deployed in its territory. In this, the measure failed. A few ships went over to the Solomani cause, others were seized as they lay in dockyards and in some cases vessels were interned on spurious charges. Crews were deported and the vessels pressed into Solomani service.

In theory, the Confederation was not permitted to use the Imperial bases. It was inevitable it would, however, but this was a mixed blessing for both sides. The Solomani could create triumphant propaganda vids of its personnel taking control of former Imperial bases and tearing down their insignia but it now had to find the personnel to man them and the funds to support them. The Imperium quietly passed an ordinance making maintenance of the bases the responsibility of the Solomani Autonomous Region, in accordance with its demonstrated wishes. The transfer came with a responsibility to maintain the bases in a condition suitable to be used by the Imperial Navy, to permit use by Imperial forces at any time and to pay a contribution amounting to rent on the bases. This was ignored by the Solomani.

Although war had been averted over the issue of Imperial assets in the Solomani Confederation, the situation generally favoured the Imperial position. The Solomani had few ships and many bases, creating a huge drain on the economy. The interstellar communications network was all but gone and the Imperium had gained a new reserve of ships, which were mostly deployed close to the Solomani border. The Imperium confidently assumed that the drain on a disrupted economy would result in a request for the fleets to come home and the bases to be returned.

In this, the Imperials underestimated the stubbornness of the Solomani and their willingness to endure difficult times in the name of their ideals. All available ships were placed under the command of the Solomani Confederation Navy, which was tasked with restoring communications, suppressing lawlessness and disloyalty, and preparing to repel an Imperial invasion. This was a mammoth task considering the resources available and an emergency building programme was implemented for everything from couriers to capital ships. In the meantime, the Solomani Confederation struggled through a difficult period of consolidation.

Internal Conflicts

It did not take long for relations to begin deteriorating between the dominant racial Solomani majority and the non Solomani or mixed-race populations within the Confederation itself. Non-Solomani, while officially Confederation citizens, were excluded from membership in the Solomani Party. Disenfranchised and living in troubled times, these people were naturally nervous about a future they had no say in. A small proportion took the difficult decision to journey to Imperial space and were assisted by the Imperial government. The Solomani did not oppose these movements, although there was occasionally friction between Imperial shipowners and the authorities in the regions they passed through. Exodus was only an option for the few who could afford it or those who could join one of the Imperial Relocation Programmes, however.

There were many worlds within the Solomani Rim, Diaspora, Old Expanses and Alpha Crucis that possessed large non-Solomani populations. Their populations had lobbied against the formation of the Solomani Autonomous Region; they had actively and sometimes violently opposed the growth of the Party and the creation of the Confederation. Now they paid the price for their opposition. These minorities were increasingly subject to social prejudice and discriminatory policies. Active resistance began on many worlds, ranging from peaceful protests to terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare against local Solomani governments and the new Solomani Confederation authorities.

To deal with this resistance, the Solomani Confederation created an organisation formally entitled the Solomani Confederation Security Service. This was rapidly shortened to Solomani Security, with the organisation being generally referred as SolSec. The organisation was formally established in 882, although it had much earlier roots in smaller local or mission-specific agencies. The earliest forerunner of SolSec was originally a citizen's watchdog movement established by populist wings of the Solomani Party to ensure greater government transparency and prevent Party corruption. SolSec continued this mission but gained new powers either through amalgamation of agencies or as the Solomani Party deemed necessary. SolSec was increasingly employed to monitor the loyalty of all citizens, whether or not they were Party members. It quickly achieved the status of a secret police with broad powers to arrest or eliminate any threat to the Solomani Cause.

The problems of worlds with mixed race populations in the Confederation paled compared to the tensions created by worlds that possessed majority non-Solomani human or alien populations. Although officially part of the Solomani Autonomous District, these worlds did not recognise the legality of the Solomani Confederation and insisted they were still part of the Imperium; in effect, they existed as Imperial client states located inside the bounds of the Solomani Sphere.

The Confederation's leaders were unwilling to tolerate the existence of pro-Imperial enclaves within its own territory. These worlds came under relentless economic and political pressure, including trade embargoes and blockades enforced by the newly organised Solomani Confederation Navy. In turn, they began to petition the Imperium for help. This only served to increase mistrust of 'disloyal aliens' and resulted in several incidents that would eventually lead to war.

The oppressive policies of the Solomani Confederation caused a growing resistance from non-Solomani, particularly from the Vegans of the Vegan District in the Solomani Rim and by Vilani and mixed-race pro-Imperial inhabitants of the Old Expanses. Where minorities were less organised or the Party was too entrenched, resistance was lower key, typically taking the form of non-violent protest and disruption. Where large mixed or non-Solomani populations existed, relations between the Solomani Party-run governments and these minorities often deteriorated to the point of open conflict and planetary war.

Conflict between the resistance movements and the Solomani government forces are considered by some historians to be the actual beginnings of the Solomani Rim War. Vilani organisations in the Old Expanses began to dispatch aid to their cousins in the Solomani-controlled areas. Protests and appeals to government were still more common than riots and guerrilla warfare but the level of violence gradually escalated. Since incidents almost always happened in areas populated by non-Solomani, it was these populations that suffered when violence broke out. This led to a cycle of increasing violence and hatred, made worse by those who resorted to terrorism.

Both sides used terror as a weapon. Disaffected non-Solomani would strike back any way they could and some believed they were justified in crossing the line into terrorism. Unofficial pro-Solomani groups hit back, motivated by hate, and were often ignored or even protected by the authorities. The Solomani authorities at times used terror to cow a rebellious population – terrorism was not merely the province of the wild-eyed fanatic; it could be and was coldly planned in a centre of government.

The plight of non-Solomani began to garner attention in the Imperium. Subsector and sector level media and sentient being's rights groups had warned of growing racism in the Solomani Confederation for decades but their voices had been ignored. This soon changed. In 899, the Old Expanses and Diaspora offices of the Makhidkarun megacorporation mounted a gigantic media campaign aimed at exposing the excesses of the Solomani Movement. Their coverage was carefully slanted to emphasise the loyalty of Solomani within the Imperium while casting those in the Solomani Sphere as different, reactionary and racist. Nonetheless, the Solomani Movement charged that Imperial media focused on the police actions, not on the disorder and terrorism that triggered them.

Vilani and Vegan supporters and Imperial sophonts' rights activists argued these problems had not occurred under non-partisan Imperial rule. They claimed Solomani control of the Sphere was itself illegitimate; the more extreme among them suggested the only worlds Solomani had any special claim to were those of Terra and its original colonies. Well-meaning people sent money to anti-Solomani organisations or even went to join them. Whilst some of these were legitimate advocacy and sophonts-rights groups, others were outright terrorist organisations. Discovery of this small but steady flow of aid to their opponents created yet more resentment among the Solomani.

A Solomani Exodus

The perceived arrogance of the Solomani fed a reciprocal increase in anti-Solomani feeling through other parts of the Imperium. Although this was directed primarily at the more racist elements of the Solomani Movement and Party, it still made life uncomfortable for ordinary Imperial citizens who had previously taken pride in their pure Solomani blood, celebrated Terran heritage or expressed any sympathy toward the Movement's aspirations. In sectors distant from the Solomani Sphere, such as the Spinward Marches or Antares, this friction was muted, rarely leading to more than a schoolyard taunts or argument between friends. For ethnic Solomani living in Imperial territory adjacent to the Solomani Sphere, such as the Old Expanses, it was stronger. Their loyalty to the Imperium was questioned, Solomani cultural events were cancelled or lost funding and their careers or livelihoods suffered.

Most Solomani in these circumstances stoically maintained their loyalty to the Imperium, especially those with traditions of service in institutions like the Imperial Navy. Others, however, decided they were no longer welcome. As tensions grew, millions of Solomani living just outside the Sphere began to emigrate into it. The Solomani Movement actively encouraged this. In 905 an advertising campaign by the Rim Foundation, a charity formed by the Solomani Party and the corporation Transstar, trumpeted the virtues of a life within the Confederation where proud Solomani heritage could be celebrated amongst one's racial peers. The Rim Foundation raised billions of Credits to provide low passage and financial aid for ethnic Solomani who wished to emigrate to worlds in the Solomani Confederation. These immigrants were encouraged to colonise frontier worlds in Aldebaran and the rimward regions of Alpha Crucis, to ensure these regions had an all-Solomani population. A side effect of this campaign was the formal codification in planetary law of racially-exclusive immigration policies on many Confederation worlds.

THE SOLOMANI RIM WAR

With the ascent of Margaret II to the Imperial throne in 908, the non-Solomani inhabitants of the Confederation believed they had finally found their champion. In the mid-900s she turned attention to the Confederation in response to increasingly urgent appeals from the Imperial client states within the sphere. These had begun to petition the Empress directly, asking to be governed directly by the Imperium. Empress Margaret and her advisors decided to grant their request in order to bring this upstart Confederation to heel.

The Imperium initially relied on a mix of diplomacy and threat of force. When a Vilani world deposed its Solomani government either through political process or revolution, it would petition to be placed under direct Imperial government. These transitions of power were fully legal under the Charter of the Solomani Autonomous Region, which the Imperium still considered to be in force. In such cases, the Imperial

Navy deployed forces into the Solomani Sphere to face down any Solomani Confederation attempt to restore their authority. The Confederation initially backed down but minor skirmishes occurred in the Old Expanses and the Rim as Imperial Navy vessels escorted merchants to break Solomani Navy blockades or moved to reinforce the defences of those states whose governments had petitioned for Imperial protection.

The Solomani Confederation largely confined itself to diplomatic protests and counter-revolutionary activity on worlds that were wavering between Solomani and non-Solomani factions. It was galling to have to permit Imperial Naval forces to deploy in pockets throughout the Confederation but the Solomani were outmatched and unprepared for war. Acquiescence bought time, during which the Confederation marshalled its forces and began to move military strength to its coreward border worlds.

In 944, the Confederation's Secretariat led by Secretary General Mohammed Weinberg formally protested Imperial meddling in what they called its sovereign affairs. They claimed the Imperium had violated the charter and demanded the withdrawal of all Imperial Navy forces from the Solomani Sphere. Empress Margaret responded by revoking the charter and ordering the dissolution of the Solomani Autonomous Region, along with the reintegration of Terra into the Imperium. She selected the Terran date of 13 March, 5471 (292–950 Imperial) for this decree. The choice of date was symbolic, reflecting the incorporation of Terra into the Imperium and the marriage of Zhakirov and Antiama.

Imperial forces began massing at naval bases in the Old Expanses and Diaspora, threatening a full-scale invasion if the Solomani continued to resist. The Confederation wavered in its resolve, with the Secretariat and high council divided between those who advocated fierce resistance and pragmatists who knew they were not ready for war. It is probable that war would have followed and the Solomani would almost certainly be crushed. However, Empress Margaret II died suddenly of natural causes, leaving the Imperial plans in disarray.

In 945 the Imperial throne passed to Margaret's youthful grandson, Styryx. The new emperor lacked the passion and organisational abilities of his grandmother and was more interested in enjoying his new position than potentially plunging the Imperium into a massive war

on the Rim. Rather than continue Margaret's military build-up and the threat of military pressure, he instead emphasised continued diplomatic efforts. This staved off war but it also gave the Confederation additional time to build up its own military forces.

Despite earnest and determined diplomacy the number and intensity of border incidents and skirmishes increased, as the Confederation began to aggressively push back against Imperial intervention. By 970, Styryx' advisors persuaded him that his policy was not working and the Imperial Navy renewed preparations for a major confrontation. Once again, they hoped that the Solomani Confederation could be intimidated by show of force. The Imperial strategy relied on the Vegan worlds which, unlike the Vilani worlds of the Old Expanses, lay deep within the Solomani Rim. Their plan was to grant the Vegans their own Autonomous District within the Solomani Sphere, reinforce their existing garrison and use this as a base for a strong Imperial presence in the heart of the Solomani territory.

The plan seemed workable but its advocates underestimated the Solomani reaction. The Confederation could not tolerate a threat to their existence and began full-scale war production. In 984 the strongly anti-Imperial Solomani Party high council leader Sergio Bordoni was elected Secretary General. He was supported by two other hawks: Grand Admiral Shuki La Pierre and SolSec coordinator Rachel Zhang. Meanwhile, Imperial attention was distracted by the outbreak of the Third Frontier War (979–986), which had diverted military resources to the Spinward Marches. Faced with multiple crises beyond his ability to handle, Emperor Styryx abdicated in 989.

Taking advantage of what they hoped would be a period of confusion, in 990 the Bordoni-led triumvirate cajoled the Solomani Party congress and then the Secretariat of the Solomani Confederation into issuing a resolution that re-asserted their claim to the entire Solomani Sphere, including those systems that had re-joined the Imperium. The newly-crowned Emperor Gavin took this as a statement of hostilities. Not wanting to appear weak or indecisive, he formally declared war against the Solomani Confederation.

Total War

The outbreak of war was anything but unexpected. The Solomani Confederation was aware that the Imperium could bring an overwhelming level of force to bear but that it would take time to do so. They therefore had two prospects for victory. The first was to perform a feat of arms sufficient to force the Imperials to the negotiating table before their distant reserve fleets could arrive. If that failed, the only chance was to inflict such terrible casualties that the Imperials preferred negotiation to total victory. Thus the fleets were in position and had their provisional orders long before war was declared.

As soon as the announcement was made, the plan was put into action: a bold advance into Imperial territory. The Confederation hoped to shock the Imperials with heavy defeats and threaten the destruction of key assets or the loss of prestigious worlds. Former Solomani systems were to be retaken if possible, along with Imperial systems of great strategic value. The campaign was launched with the certainty that complete military victory was impossible and that the best hope was to follow the old military adage: Grab what you can and sue for peace.

The first phase of the Confederation offensive achieved swift success in Diaspora and Daibei, regaining some frontier worlds they had lost over the last 50 years and capturing some new territory inside the Imperium. The Solomani had been blooded in the prior decades of skirmishing and had a solid operational plan, experienced crews and high morale. The heavy Solomani units, although using slightly inferior technology, were of more recent construction than the Imperial Navy ships deployed against them and incorporated the latest military doctrine into their designs.

Despite the disparity between the Confederation and the Imperium, the initial advantage lay heavily with the Solomani. The Imperial border fleets were numerically weaker than the massed naval forces of the Solomani Confederation and commanders suffered from the same complacency that had hampered the Navy during the Third Frontier War. This was especially true among reserve forces brought as reinforcements. In this environment the key advantage held by the Confederation was strategic initiative. Many units of the Imperial Navy were caught in 'political deployments' rather than as a concentrated battle force. These were destroyed or forced to surrender for minimal casualties. A Confederation capital ship might be outgunned by its Imperial equivalent, and the Imperium might have far more of them, but at the 'point of decision' the Solomani Confederation Navy could put far more firepower into an engagement than its enemies.

Despite these advantages the Solomani Confederation did not have it all their own way. Imperial Navy units put up a stubborn resistance or died hard where they were unable to retreat. Some of the most desperate early fighting occurred deep within the Solomani Sphere, in Alpha Crucis and the Solomani Rim sectors. Margaret II had committed the Imperium to protect several non-Solomani worlds located far from the border and their garrisons had neither been adequately reinforced nor withdrawn under her timorous successor. Numerically inferior Imperial Navy forces trapped behind enemy lines were defeated, pursued and destroyed. Where key Imperial-held worlds were no more than a parsec from major Confederation planets, the Solomani strategy made innovative use of system defence boats. With careful advance planning, hundreds of planetary navy SDBs risked harrowing multi-year sublight journeys, their crews frozen in low berths. This freed up significant Confederation Navy starships for the heavy fighting on the Imperial border.

Despite early Confederation Navy victories, stiff resistance continued on the planetary surfaces of major worlds, where local non-Solomani forces were stiffened by strong Imperial Army garrisons. The Solomani Confederation Army, with limited experience in full-scale planetary assault, took heavier than expected losses. Solomani generals increasingly came to rely on siege warfare and massive artillery bombardments, showing little concern for high civilian casualties in regions with largely non-Solomani populations.

Solomani forces began to encounter further difficulty in 993 when fleet advances into the Old Expanses were met with unexpectedly fierce resistance from planetary navies and subsector fleets. These bought the Imperial Navy time to regroup and counter-attack in strength, using forces brought up from depots in neighbouring sectors. The Confederation Navy suffered major fleet losses, especially among capital ships. Solomani ground forces were left trapped on worlds that still held out. Once the Imperial Navy had regained space superiority throughout most of the Old Expanses, Imperial Marines landed to reinforce those Imperial Army units that still held out, trapping several divisions of Solomani troops. Others were evacuated as the Solomani Confederation Navy pulled back. Imperial cruiser squadrons broke through into Alpha Crucis, launching hit-and-run raids on commercial highports. Lightly protected colony worlds behind Solomani lines were hit. Nuclear strikes were used against starports, in retaliation for prior Solomani actions.

The Solomani admiralty pressed for a withdrawal from the Old Expanses, concentrating on a strategy that would exploit successes in Daibei and Diaspora. Instead, panicked demands from the Secretariat representatives of the Old Expanses and Alpha Crucis insisted that every world there to be defended at all costs. The secretary-general acquiesced, a decision considered by many to have lost the war for the Confederation. The Solomani Navy halted plans to continue its advances into Imperial territory and moved to a defensive posture. Strike cruisers and escorts that had been tied up in siege operations in the interior were moved to reinforce the main fleet and additional Army units were called up. The Imperium reinforced Diaspora and Solomani momentum was lost.

The Long War

The period 993 to 998 was one of stalemate giving way to steadily increasing Imperial pressure. The grinding battles in the Old Expanses and the Solomani Party's stubborn refusal to abandon territory there had depleted the Confederation forces. The Spinward Marches now appeared to be peaceful and the Imperium was free to devote its full attention to the Solomani Rim War, as this conflict was now called. The resources of the Confederation, although significant, could not match that of the entire Imperium in a lengthy war of attrition. With the conflict going badly, the Bordoni regime lost influence, although Zhang remained in power at SolSec and her protégé Lily Magruder, Minster of Foreign Affairs, became Secretary General.

On the home front, Solomani worlds began to suffer scarcities in some goods as trade was interrupted and merchant shipping was diverted to essential military production. Conscription was employed to fill up military strength but there were few protests against the draft or the war itself. Those that did occur never became widespread due to SolSec's tight control of information. In the sparsely populated rimward regions of Aldebaran, Canopus and Alpha Crucis the levels of Solomani voluntary military enlistment and service in the interstellar merchant marine were so high that they threatened to cause a labour shortage. This was mitigated through the controversial expedient of transitioning large numbers of primitive indigenous aliens – the 'prindigs' – off their reservations and into productive agricultural and factory work.

Although the war effort was broadly popular, as it dragged on SolSec was often called into action to deal with sporadic risings by non Solomani minorities who felt deliverance was at hand. To free up troops on the home front, SolSec assumed broader military powers, developing what amounted to its own private armies. SolSec paramilitary forces even fought against Solomani governments, engaging in little-publicised combat operations to eliminate the leadership of certain planetary Solomani Parties who were wavering in support of the Cause and planning to switch sides. However, the majority of Solomani citizens remained patriotic in what they now recognised, even through the fog of official censorship, was a war of national survival.

Endgame

The year 998 saw the Imperial Navy achieve strategic dominance. The greater population and industrial base of the Imperium was making its power felt and Solomani forces were now outnumbered on all fronts. Constant advances by Imperial forces into the heart of the Solomani Sphere marked the final phase of the war, from 998 to 1002.

The new strategist of the Imperial high command, Grand Admiral Arielle Adair, had studied Terran history and did not wish to repeat the same mistakes that the Vilani Empire had. This was to be no mere punitive expedition that simply regained a few border worlds. The Solomani were to be crushed with the Imperial flag planted on Terra.

The Imperial fleets had two main objectives: liberation of the Vegans and the capture or destruction of key Confederation assets – Navy bases and industrial worlds that were vital to military production. They chose not to divert their main strength to relieve Imperial worlds still resisting Confederation sieges or by taking minor subsector capitals. That was left to second-line forces, which were ordered to initiate a series of light probing attacks across the entire frontier in order to distract attention from the central thrusts. The Imperial Navy also made skilful use of cruiser squadrons to raid deep into Confederation space, hitting lightly defended planets and keeping the Solomani off balance. Forced onto the defensive at objectives of the Imperium's choosing, the Confederation fleets began to be defeated in detail just as they had done to the Imperials at the beginning of the war.

With many task forces tied down reinforcing inadequate planetary defences, the Solomani Confederation Navy was slow to concentrate its forces against the Imperial advance. The Imperial strategy was to attack in force along two parallel axes of advance that converged on the Solomani capital of Terra, with smaller task forces fanning out to cut a huge pocket of Solomani territory off from the rest of Confederation. The Imperial High Command theorised that the Solomani would have no choice but to mass large forces to protect Terra. This would open the way for the defeat of the unsupported forces caught within the pocket.

In 1001 the Imperial advance finally reached and liberated the Vegan District. This gave the Imperium the advanced base they required to bring the war to an end. Even this late in the war, Solomani forces still could win tactical successes but were unable to halt the main advance. The loss of the Vegan District pushed the Solomani high command into a desperate gamble. They consolidated their remaining naval forces into a single Grand Fleet under their ablest fleet commander, Ivan Wolfe.

Grand Admiral Wolfe recognised the danger posed by the two-pronged Imperial advance. The Imperial Navy's 17th fleet was leapfrogging along the Lagash-Nusku-Aggida line, driving toward Terra itself. Their 1st Fleet was advancing out from the Vegan worlds toward the Solomani industrial centre of Dingir. Wolfe noticed the latter advance was more tentative, due to the caution of its commander. Before the two fleets could unite, Wolfe struck at the 17th fleet, smashing its advance guard as it entered Aggida and scattering the surviving vessels. Wolfe then quickly shifted his forces to Dingir, hoping to also defeat the 1st Fleet. This gamble was necessary and justified but Wolfe underestimated the ability of the 17th fleet to reorganise. It rallied in a matter of weeks and jumped in pursuit, arriving during the decisive Battle of Dingir.

The Solomani Grand Fleet met the Imperial 1st Fleet at Dingir, bringing about what was one of the largest and lengthiest fleet engagements since the Civil War. The 1st Fleet and Grand Fleet battered one another for more than a week before the unexpected arrival of reinforcements from 17th Fleet turned the tide. Caught between them, the already weakened Solomani Grand Fleet was roughly handled but not annihilated. Their remnants, which included Wolfe's own flagship, several capital ships and fleet carriers plus a significant force of cruisers and escorts, fell back deeper into the Solomani Sphere.

The Imperial forces advanced into the Sol subsector. No major Solomani Confederation Navy forces were left to defend the Solomani capital of Terra. Instead, Wolfe had chosen to save the Confederation fleet as a force in being. This unpalatable decision brought about the survival of the Confederation but there are many who still denounce the Betrayal of Terra.

Invasion Earth

The way to Terra lay open, offering a chance to end the war. Imperial Grand Admiral Adair judged that the capture of Terra would break the will of the Solomani or at least force them to the negotiating table. A peace with the greatly diminished Solomani Confederation was desirable at that point and there was reason to hope that the loss of their homeworld would demoralise the Solomani, triggering a widespread collapse of the rest of the Confederation's strength. In addition to Wolfe's defeated fleet, the Solomani still had significant second-line fleet elements they had held back in the Dark Nebula and Magyar to secure the Confederation's spinward border against opportunistic Aslan incursions. New naval construction was also being readied in the Boötes cluster and in Alpha Crucis and Aldebaran. A swift blow might end the war before these could enter the fray.

The invasion of Terra, launched in the second half of 1002, was the largest combined naval and ground operation in Imperial history. To capture the Sol system the Imperial High Command assembled much of its available military strength into a single assault force, suspending operations elsewhere. The build-up for the assault was lengthy and in the meantime battleship and cruiser squadrons wore down the immense system defences. In addition to large, heavily armoured monitors and countless system defence boats the Solomani had repurposed warships too damaged to return to front-line operations. A few Confederation Navy ships also defied orders and remained to take part in the final defence.

Only when the way was clear could the ground assault take place. This, too, was a huge undertaking spearheaded by the best Army and Marine units available. Military bases elsewhere in the solar system were also targeted but Terra and Luna were the main objectives. These were defended not only by Confederation Army formations but also highly-motivated paramilitary groups that had been lavishly supplied with weaponry by the Confederation authorities.

The numerically-superior Imperial Navy forces destroyed the major Confederation units in the initial phase of the invasion but surviving system defence boats waged an annoying hit-and-run campaign, attempting to deny the Navy secure control of Terra's orbital space. Despite the best efforts of these craft, the Navy achieved local space superiority for long enough to drop Imperial Marines in regimental strength in attempt to capture Terra's three starports.

Imperial forces then broke out of the North American southwest, crossed the central plains and began fighting their way into the heavily industrialised Caribbean islands and the industrial centres of Central and South America. Further landings in Australia and North Africa secured additional lodgements. Once the Imperial Navy mopped up what was left of Terra's SDB wings, it was able to provide heavy orbital fire support. As increasingly desperate fighting erupted across the planet, tens of thousands of ordinary Terran citizens also took up arms, harassing Imperial supply lines and striking at lightly defended rear areas. Elite Confederation commando teams left behind enemy lines supported and organised the guerrilla operations.

The Imperial invasion nearly met disaster in its fifth week, when elements of the newly landed 299th Imperial Field Army were caught between advancing African and European mechanised armies. The Imperial 713th Lift Infantry Corps were destroyed covering their retreat out of Spain as they fell back on AECO starport in Africa. A counteroffensive across the Atlantic supported by massive orbital bombardment turned the tide. Resistance ended in Europe when the entire Confederation 124th Lift Infantry Corps were trapped and destroyed in the Battle of the Spanish Pocket. This brought to an end organised resistance in Europe and Africa, although guerrilla attacks continued.

Fast-moving grav tank battles that swirled around the Pacific Rim arcologies saw the final destruction of the massed Terran armies. The last two months of the war were a grim mopping up operation, as surviving pockets of Solomani regulars died to keep the Imperials pinned down on Terra and guerrillas hid caches of weapons to fight another day. The last organised Confederation Army unit, a reinforced planetary defence garrison dug in under Mount Farallon, surrendered on 313–1002. Terra had fallen to the Imperium.

Armistice

Imperial strategists believed the fall of Terra would end forever the idea of Solomani superiority. They failed to consider that the Solomani were not the centrally Party-run dictatorship their propaganda painted it as. Much of the Confederation saw itself as a coalition of independent worlds bound by common ties of blood. The Solomani Cause was not something that was imposed from above but a way of life for a large proportion of the population. The Solomani were a fiercely independent people who no longer thought of themselves as Imperials. The fall of Terra was a heavy blow to them but with much of Wolfe's fleet still intact, they could continue to fight. More importantly, they were willing to.

The Imperial government was deeply concerned with the strain that 12 years of total war had imposed on their economy. Moderates on both sides had already entered into informal peace negotiations, although these had been badly disrupted by the assault on Terra. Once it became clear that the surrender of Terra was not going to trigger an immediate Solomani collapse and with the remains of Ivan Wolfe's Grand Fleet still constituting a major strategic threat, the Imperial High Command accepted Solomani diplomatic overtures and negotiated an armistice. For their part, Wolfe and other Solomani supreme commanders were glad to gain a respite to regroup their remaining forces. Their own civilian government was still reeling from the loss of Terra, with conflicting factions turning against one another. A significant minority of Solomani Party fanatics demanded an immediate counter-attack to regain Terra at any cost. Admiral Wolfe, backed by realist elements in the government, refused to squander lives or risk his fleet. Despite calls for his immediate replacement, his arguments gained the backing of SolSec which silenced most of his critics. The end of 1002 saw a cessation of organised hostilities throughout the Solomani Sphere.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

The Confederation and Imperium informally agreed to extend the armistice indefinitely but no peace treaty was ever signed. Officially, the Imperium still does not recognise the existence of the Solomani Confederation. Reciprocally, the Confederation does not recognise the Vegan Autonomous Region or the validity of Imperial claims to the worlds that were lost during the conflict they refer to as 'War of Solomani Liberty'.

Military historians still debate the decision to invade Terra. In retrospect it may have been a blunder, a Pyrrhic victory for the Imperium that allowed the Solomani Confederation to survive as a nation. Nevertheless, the war was a clear defeat for the Solomani. The Imperium ended the war in control of roughly 25% of the former Solomani Sphere. The occupied systems were reintegrated back into the Imperium, with the exception of those worlds transferred to the newly formed Vegan Autonomous District. Worlds with pro-Imperial populations were restored to civilian control as soon as functioning civil government could be restored. Worlds with pro-Solomani populations, such as Terra, came under military occupation. Organised resistance ceased after the armistice but intermittent guerrilla activity still flares up on many occupied worlds, despite heavy reprisals.

Although it had not collapsed, the Solomani Confederation had suffered a terrific shock. The economy was a shambles and despite the best efforts of SolSec and the state-run media, popular belief in the Solomani Party and the Cause was badly shaken. The invasion of Terra had been a heroic last stand but it also had resulted in enormous death and destruction, most of it Solomani. Other worlds also suffered badly. Even on planets never touched by the fighting, most citizens had lost friends or family that were killed, maimed or captured while serving in the Armed Forces or aboard merchant starships.

Grand Admiral Ivan Wolfe, despite defeat at Dingir and the controversial decision not to stand and fight at Terra, emerged from the war with an untarnished reputation. His cogent strategic arguments in favour of the armistice had demolished the case of the fanatics and won him support among pragmatists in the Solomani Party. With the war over, he was encouraged by leading Solomani Party factions to seek high political office. New elections were held in the Secretariat in 1003, which meant in improvised chambers aboard the battleship *Morrigan*. Despite opposition from delegates who blamed him not fighting to the bitter end, Wolfe was easily elected as the new Secretary General of the Confederation. In an interesting parallel, his Imperial counterpart, Admiral Adair, would later be invested as Archduchess of the Domain of Sol and thus chief Imperial viceroy for the Solomani Rim and adjacent sectors. The respect the two old adversaries felt for one another went a long way to ensuring that the terms of the armistice were upheld in the post-war decade.

Wolfe's first major act was to establish a new capital for the Solomani Confederation. He chose Home in the Aldebaran sector, largely for its location and similar conditions to Terra. The name 'Home' was a contrivance based on what the existing population called their world. These people were Sanctaterrists; members of an anti-technologist movement. Whilst the newly established administration was generally respectful of the peaceful Sanctaterrists, 'our home' became 'the home of the Solomani People' and quickly just 'Home'.

In the eight years Wolfe served as Secretary General, he maintained a firm stance against any effort to renew hostilities and negotiated an agreement that arranged for the exchange of millions of prisoners of war and displaced persons. His administration was able to skilfully balance the interests of the Solomani Party, the military and SolSec with that of the population as a whole. Wolfe succeeded in pushing through a series of military and governmental reforms that helped rebuild and strengthen the Confederation and repair the shattered Solomani economy.

The new administration created industrial centres deep within Confederation territory to replace those that had been lost to the Imperium and signed a new trade agreement with the Hive Federation. Relations with the Aslan Hierate did not improve, however. The Confederation Navy responded forcefully when Aslan clans probed for weakness on the spinward border. This peaked in 1007, when a large Confederation task force fought an inconclusive battle with Aslan warships in the Ustral Quadrant.

Wolfe also pushed through a reorganisation of the planetary army and navy forces, placing them within a centralised Home Forces system to serve as a source of replacements and reserves for the armed forces. He did not want the Confederation Navy to ever again be forced to disperse its forces to protect individual worlds that neglected their own defences. Under his prodding, the Secretariat agreed that individual worlds

The Phoenix Project

In 1040, Imperial occupation forces on Terra uncovered evidence of a coordinated guerrilla conspiracy codenamed the Phoenix Project. This was a programme apparently set up by Solomani leaders on Terra who had rightly predicted it would fall to the Imperium. They pre-positioned caches of military supplies and established the groundwork for a multigenerational programme to train anti-Imperial guerrillas. Caches were hidden in many different places on Terra, each holding large quantities of weapons, vehicles, medical equipment and munitions. These were supposedly of varying technological levels so as to be useful even if recovered in the distant future, regardless of the knowledge of the users. Each cache was carefully concealed with its location entrusted to a single local family. These families were to form the cadre of a guerrilla force when the rising was to take place. There were unconfirmed rumours of two further stages: a code-name 'Lambda' that would signal a mass rising and a secret 'Omega' stage that would involve intervention by Solomani military forces.

The Imperial military authorities initiated a major counter-insurgency operation to seek out the caches and kill or arrest the families involved. Simultaneous raids took place around the globe, often led the Imperial Marines. These were followed by additional strikes based on information and prisoner interrogations. Hundreds of guerrillas were killed or captured and over 7,000 sympathisers were detained for suspected ties to Phoenix Project cells. Several hidden caches were discovered yielding 600 tons of military supplies ranging from advanced combat rifles to a stockpile of nuclear demolition charges. Children that were receiving guerrilla indoctrination were also taken into custody. Much of the contraband was Terran army weapons that had gone missing after their forces surrendered.

The arrested guerrillas received military trials, most of them in secret. Over 2,000 suspects were convicted for numerous violations of Imperial martial law including weapons possessions and membership of banned organisations. Hundreds of leaders were executed or received life sentences at Imperial prison planets for committing imperial high crimes including conspiracy to commit treason and possession of nuclear weapons. The indoctrinated children were sent to reform institutions on non-Solomani worlds.

Public statements by Terran Imperial military government claim the Phoenix Project was successfully aborted. A few guerrillas did escape the net but most were arrested or eliminated over the next few decades and the rest rendered ineffectual through disruption of their networks. Resistance activity continued but mainly in the form of occasional riots or sporadic terrorist incidents.

Imperial historians have since cast doubt on whether the Phoenix Project had ever been a coordinated program. Although the guerrilla groups and weapons caches were real, many now consider the Lambda and Omega stages to have been mere propaganda, used by guerrilla leaders to energise and recruit followers. Conspiracy theories and rumours to the contrary still persist, alleging that guerrilla families or caches eluded the net.

A few small supply caches or wartime-era weapons drops have turned up in the 65 years since the crackdown, mostly by accident. The last reported find was in Lake Hauroko in New Zealand in 1102. Divers searching for a pair of missing tourists found a shipping container packed with Rim War-era military combat drugs and medical supplies.

or districts would be permitted to reserve more of their tax revenues for Home Forces provided these met a suitable standard of capability.

Wolfe's legacy as a capable statesman and skilled commander is unquestioned but some of his policies had unanticipated results. Many of the political and economic reforms promoted local industrial and political power but this came at the expense of centralised Confederation control. Stronger Home Forces also encouraged factionalism, increasing the military power available to world governments and the local Solomani parties that ran them. Wolfe's industrial development policies established new centres further from the threatened Imperial border. Over time, this also moved the centre of gravity of Solomani society to rimward and trailing, creating political-economic rivalries between old Solomani worlds in the rump of the Rim and Magyar and the emerging economic powers in sectors like Aldebaran and Alpha Crucis.

The defeat of the Confederation weakened the Solomani Party as belief in the Solomani Cause was challenged. In the wake of the Solomani Rim War the institutions of the Confederation were overstretched. SolSec struggled to cope with the twin problems of organising guerrilla operations in occupied systems and dealing with dissatisfied populations on those worlds that were questioning the very basis of Party rule. Although the Solomani Confederation was able to weather these storms they still paid a price. After 1002 the Party lost its grip over dozens of worlds. Some used the military's post-war weakness as an opportunity to secede from the Confederation and others governments became dangerously unstable and independent in their policies.

Confederation policy in the post-Wolfe years has been fairly conservative with member states allowed wide latitude in their internal affairs. Major accomplishments included the gradual thawing of relations with the Imperium, particularly in the Solomani Rim. This led to improvement of trade and strengthening of the economy, which in turn permitted rejuvenation of the merchant fleet. Another major accomplishment was the declaration of the Solomani Science Initiative in 1041 championed by Minister of Science and Technology Yuki Jung who later become Secretary General. The SSI was partly a propaganda stunt; it included a 'decade of scientific achievement' in which one mega project was announced in each sector every year including an interstellar expedition that launched a squadron of ships on a voyage to the next galactic arm. However it also provided Secretariat funding for new high-tech educational and research centres throughout the Solomani Confederation and also quietly cleaned house by de-politicising many moribund scientific institutes on major worlds.

The 1080s and 1090s witnessed the rise of some more radical factions in the Solomani Party notably the Goodallites and the Dolphin Embracers who advocated increased rights for uplifted animals. Both managed to send significant delegations of supportive humans and associate-member non-humans to the General Party Congress for the first time. Even so, neither were able to challenge the dominance of purist factions. Support for granting full Party membership to uplifted animals or to non-Solomani humans remains a minority view. The same period also saw the start of a disturbing increase in terrorist attacks and political assassinations within the Confederation, mainly from partisans of the increasingly fragmented but still militant factions of the Solomani Party.

The Confederation has generally avoided large-scale foreign military adventurism and taken a defensive policy with regard to its major rivals; the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate. It maintained strong reserve fleet assets on the Aslan border throughout most of the Solomani Rim War, which prevented any major crises developing. However various minor internal military and political problems kept the Confederation military busy between 1050 and 1105. The rebuilding of the Confederation military forces has also allowed them to flex their muscles again. Typical of these events were the Duni War (1086) in Alpha Crucis, in which a Confederation Navy fleet defeated the upstart Commonwealth of Gadjick and the Boötes Trade War of 1098–1102.

The newest Confederation government is led by Secretary General Salazar, a former Minister of Justice and ex-mayor of Home's capital district. His administration has emphasised internal stability and continued funding of rimward expansion in sectors like Aldebaran, Canopus and Neworld. Under Salazar the Secretariat and High Council have focused on internal problems within the Confederation including nation-building on poor worlds in the Dark Nebula and peacekeeping oppositions on 'troublesome' Confederation worlds. Currently the Confederation is involved in two large-scale police and humanitarian relief actions against 'rogue' Solomani states at Willeson in Aldebaran and Brookwall in Alpha Crucis. If these drag on or other major crises develop, Salazar's tenure may be in trouble.

CHAPTER-THREE

THE SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

The Solomani Confederation, founded in 871, is the third largest human interstellar state – exceeded only by the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate. The original boundaries of the Confederation were the Solomani Sphere, a 50-parsec radius zone centred on Terra in the Solomani Rim. During the Solomani Rim War a quarter of its territory was lost to the Imperium, leaving a large bite missing from its central coreward region down to Terra.

The present Confederation includes portions of 13 sectors: most of Aldebaran, Alpha Crucis, Canopus, Magyar and Neworld and smaller slices of the Dark Nebula, Daibei, Solomani Rim, Spica and Ustral Quadrant. It also includes slivers of the Reaver's Deep and Old Expanses.

Aldebaran, Canopus and Neworld are collectively known as the Confederation's rimward frontier. Except for the Home subsector, this is a less-populous region ripe for future Solomani expansion. Their rimward subsectors are sparsely populated with many young colonies and border a region of space not yet claimed by any other major powers. The population is 90% pure Solomani; the rest are mainly primitive indigenous races and genetic uplifts such as Dolphins.

The Dark Nebula and Ustral Quadrant are informally dubbed the Lion's Mane. A combination of lucrative trade and sporadic conflict with the Aslan Hierate clans dominates politics and business. The population is similar to the rimward frontier, with a tiny Aslan minority. Some of the Solomani worlds were settled by desperate refugees from the old Terran colonies deeper in the Hierate that eventually fell during the Aslan Border Wars. Driven out of more hospitable homes, the worlds they retreated to in the Dark Nebula and Ustral Quadrant were often grim and unforgiving; so are many of their inhabitants.

Magyar, the Solomani Rim and Alpha Crucis are sometimes called the Core Confederation, although this is often extended to the Home subsector of Aldebaran as well. These sectors are home to the earliest Terran settlements, the minority of Old Solomani worlds that have been settled for as long as 3,500 years. There are also younger colonies in the more rimward regions, such as Alpha Crucis' trailing subsectors. The Core Confederation worlds also border the Imperium and include some worlds that have culturally diverse populations, with a mix of Solomani majorities and non-Solomani minorities. Border disputes, Solomani Movement politics and trade with the Imperium are major issues.

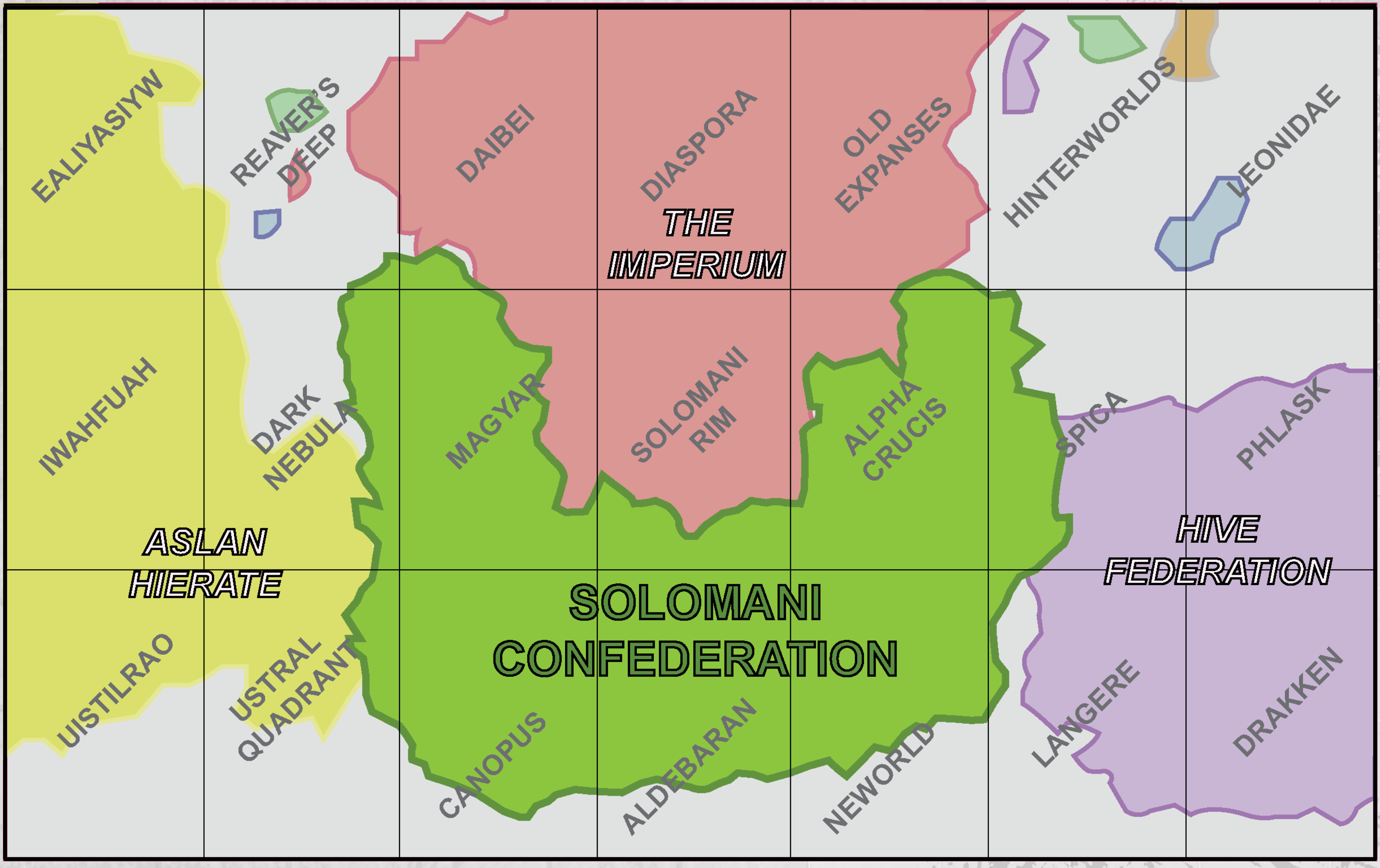
Spica and Langere are the Trailing Frontier sectors. They are both closely involved in trade with the Hive Federation and with independent worlds and pocket empires on the Confederation's trailing border. Langere is sometimes considered part of the rimward frontier, including several new colony worlds.

The Occupied Systems: Those worlds that once belonged to the Confederation but are now held by the Imperium are generally referred to as the Occupied Systems. In practice, the term is mainly used in reference to worlds with majority Solomani populations that might want to return to Confederation rule, such as Terra, especially where pro-Solomani political action or guerrilla activity is taking place.

SECTORS

The Solomani Confederation retains the Imperial mapping conventions of sectors and subsectors. It does not use them as units of interstellar government, although the bureaucracy and military are often organised on a sector basis.

Certain broad generalities apply the sectors within the Solomani Confederation.


EALIYASIYW
REAVER'S DEEP
DAIBEI
DIASPORA
OLD EXPANSES
HINTERWORLDS
LEONIDAE
THE IMPERIUM
IWAHFUAH
DARK NEBULA
MAGYAR
SOLOMANI RIM
ALPHA CRUCIS
SPICA
PHLASK
ASLAN HIERATE
HIVE FEDERATION
SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION
UISTILRAO
USTRAL QUADRANT
CANOPUS
ALDEBARAN
NEWORLD
LANGERE
DRAKKEN

The Solomani Rim
This sector is a highly-civilised and long-settled region on the rimward frontier of the Imperium. It includes the original Solomani homeworld Terra and its earliest colonies, as well as many old Vilani worlds and the homeworld of the alien Vegans. A century ago the sector was the central battlefield of the Solomani Rim War. Most of the sector, including Terra, was captured and occupied by the Imperium.

Only a rimward strip of subsectors remain in Solomani hands. These include some of the oldest and wealthiest Solomani worlds. The last century since the war has seen a gradual improvement in relations with the Imperium, mainly due to the desires of the worlds on either side of the border to resume lucrative trade. Even diminished, the Solomani subsectors of the Rim are one of the most important regions of the Confederation, partly due to its control of these trade routes. Notable among the mercantile powers on the Solomani side of the border are the powerful Near Boötes Cluster and the world of Kukulcan.

There remains considerable popular support for Solomani resistance movements in the occupied systems. However, the Solomani governments in power have profited from trade with the Imperium; they are dominated by pro-business factions who oppose hawkish policies and support better relations with the Imperium; their rivalries are with each other. The Confederation Navy, Imperial Navy and the Vegans maintain large military forces in the sector but for the past several years the border has been relatively quiet. This may be because the risk of incidents triggering an all-out war is deemed too great.

Aldebaran
Aldebaran is located just rimward of the Solomani Rim. Its human citizens are almost entirely pure Solomani, although there is a significant population of primitive indigenous aliens. Not all of these have successfully assimilated into Confederation society.

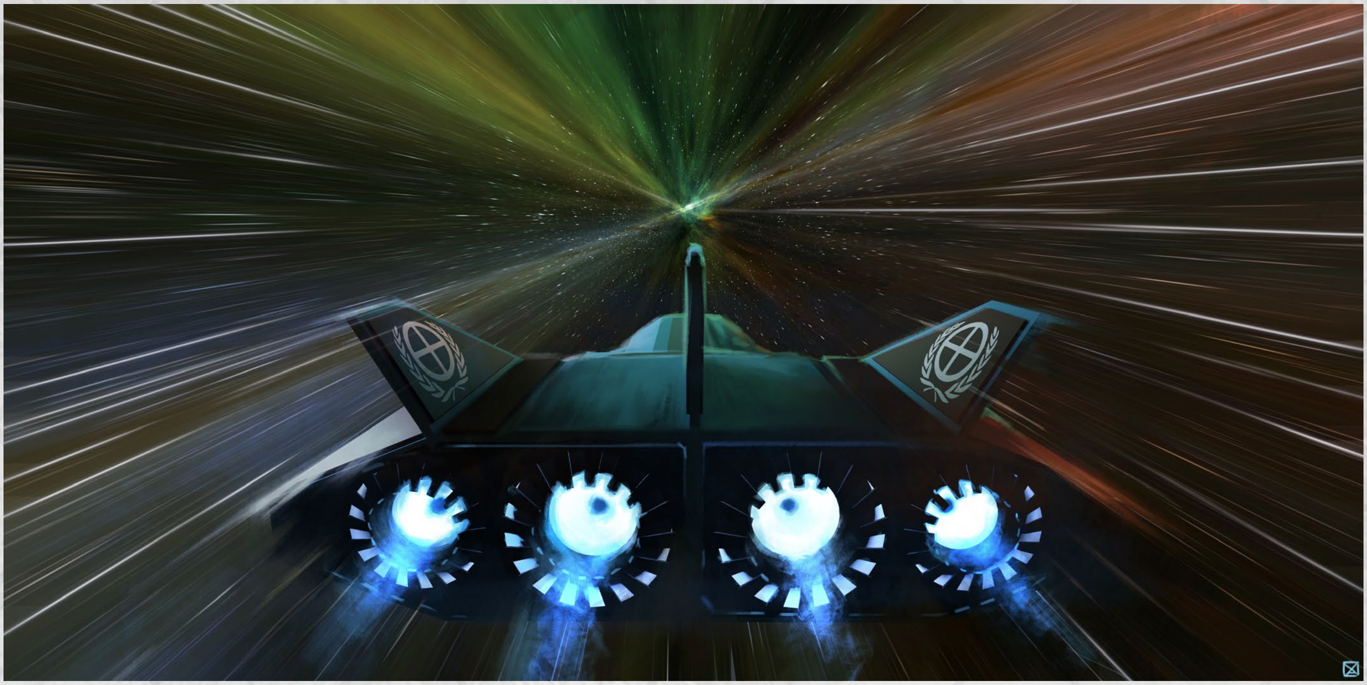
Aldebaran sector is not adjacent to any hostile powers so the region has been free of the border conflicts that have troubled other regions. A few worlds have been settled for thousands of years but only the coreward subsectors of Aldebaran were heavily populated prior to the Solomani Rim War. This changed once Home was selected as the new capital of the Confederation. Development of the sector has become a powerful engine for new economic growth. The worlds around Home are benefiting from their proximity to the Confederation's new centre of gravity while settlement of the undeveloped rimward subsectors has been accelerated. Confederation policies designed to encourage rimward settlement through liberal grants of territory on unsettled worlds have created a wide-open colonial frontier. Rival Party factions, corporations and planetary coalitions are competing in a 'land rush' to claim, colonise and tame new worlds. In some subsectors the pace of development has outpaced the rule of law. With the leadership of the Confederation Navy reluctant to commit main fleet assets to a region that is not threatened by external enemies the rimward area remains something of a 'wild frontier'.

Alpha Crucis
Alpha Crucis is a diverse region immediately to trailing of the Solomani Rim. Once located on the very fringes of the old Vilani Empire it was largely colonised by Terrans during the Interstellar Wars and the Rule of Man before being cut off in the Long Night. Never fully culturally integrated into the Third Imperium, the sector was an early hotbed of Solomani unrest whose coreward regions exploded into violence during the Solomani Rim War.

Today, Alpha Crucis contains a mix of old Vilani and Terran worlds, former pocket empires not fully integrated into Solomani society and undeveloped or non-aligned worlds that still possess a frontier character. Most of the sector is held by the Solomani Confederation but two of its subsectors were conquered by the Imperium. These remain under occupation. With most of the Imperial trade flowing through the Solomani Rim, the Alpha Crucis region has been less willing to embrace détente.

Magyar
This sector was colonised by Terra during the Interstellar Wars and Rule of Man. Its population is almost entirely Solomani. Two of its subsectors are occupied by the Imperium. During the Interstellar Wars period, the coreward subsectors of Magyar were the target of multiple colonisation ventures by several Terran ethnic groups and social movements. Some of these sought to create their own private utopias beyond the Terran Confederation. Isolated during the Long Night, these worlds retain very distinct cultures that still have echoes of old Earth. Due to its proximity to the Hierate, foreign relations with the Aslan are just as important as those with the Imperium. Magyar has a long history – dating back to the Aslan Border Wars – of being a staging area for Solomani-Aslan conflict.

The Dark Nebula and Ustral Quadrant
The Solomani Confederation controls a narrow strip of subsectors in these sectors, which border on the Aslan Hierate and non-aligned worlds. In the Dark Nebula, the frontier actually runs to within only a few parsecs of Kusyu, the Aslan homeworld. Aslan commerce is vital for the Solomani worlds in this region but raids



and skirmishes with Hierate clans are also frequent. These sectors are heavily patrolled by the Confederation Navy and have strong Home Forces garrisons. Many of the Solomani people of the region are descended from refugees who fled older Terran colonies inside the Hierate during the Aslan Border Wars. Some worlds claimed by the Solomani Confederation are actually disputed territory, part of the buffer zone that was established by the Imperium as part of early peace treaties with the Aslan. The validity of these treaties are questioned by the Solomani Confederation. Many of the buffer zone worlds, particularly those in the Dark Nebula, have collapsed into barbarism, with human or mixed human-Aslan populations living in primitive conditions.

Since achieving independence from the Imperium the Solomani of Magyar and the border sectors have gradually moved to reclaim the border worlds in hopes of reintegrating them into Confederation society. This has led to periodic clashes between Solomani and Aslan military forces. Escalation into a full-scale conflict has been prevented by the unwillingness of the Solomani Confederation Navy and High Council to divert fleets from the Imperial border.

Daibei, the Reavers Deep and Old Expanses

These are the three sectors coreward of the Dark Nebula, Magyar and Alpha Crucis respectively. The Confederation only includes a few worlds in these sectors. Large sections of Daibei and the Old Expanses, along with all of Diaspora, were lost to the Imperium during the Solomani Rim War. These worlds in these sectors usually had majority non-Solomani populations so there is a general if largely unvoiced sentiment in the Confederation that they are better off without them. A few Solomani fanatics in the Party still hope to regain these territories but this is generally seen as an impossible dream, at least as long as the Imperium itself remains unified. Those worlds in border areas that remain under Solomani control have a tendency to be authoritarian police states or under direct military rule, the better to retain control of their large non-Solomani populations.

Spica

Spica lies directly to trailing of Alpha Crucis. The Solomani Confederation controls about one-quarter of Spica, a complex frontier region that is also divided between non-aligned worlds and the Hive Federation. Commerce with the Hivers is a major part of the local Solomani economy. About half this trade takes place in the trans-border region and most of the rest at major ports and commercial hubs within a dozen parsecs of it, although ships from both powers sometimes make long voyages through the territory of the other.

Canopus

A lightly-settled frontier region to rimward of Magyar, parts of Canopus were unexplored until the last century and some worlds are still largely terra incognita. Commercial interest in Magyar and Aldebaran was renewed in the last half-century. Land-hungry Aslan clans from Ustral Quadrant have also attempted to colonise worlds in what is ostensibly Confederation territory. This has resulted in sporadic border conflicts between Confederation and Hierate vessels.

Neworld and Langere

These two sectors are located to trailing of Aldebaran, directly rimward of Alpha Crucis and Spica respectively. The Confederation claims most of Neworld and a few subsectors in Langere. Neworld consists of sparsely settled frontier mixed with a few very old Terran settlements and lost colonies. These have created their own pocket states and are only partly integrated into Solomani Confederation. Langere is even more of a frontier and includes Solomani client states that border on the Hive Federation. Although there are some disputes between Solomani and Hiver proxy states and a recent rise of piracy, there is no military conflict. The Solomani-Hiver contest in the sector has instead taken the form of diplomatic and economic rivalry to gain the affections of non-aligned worlds.

WORLDS AND MEMBER GOVERNMENTS

Solomani Confederation worlds are much like other Human worlds. The physical details and process for creating worlds is the same as detailed in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. However, there are some differences in the meaning of certain terms – the Solomani idea of a democracy might be a little different to that used in the Imperium. This is because whilst Solomani Confederation worlds include all the usual government profiles, the Confederation's charter restricts government to the Solomani Party. This seeming contradiction is explained through the flexibility of the Party in adapting itself to different societies and social hierarchies.

The key difference between the Imperium and the Confederation is the concept of member governments rather than 'worlds'. A member government has jurisdiction over all of its territory, which usually means its homeworld and the rest of the star system. A member government can sometimes control only a portion of a planet or may have territory in other star systems. Whilst the Confederation services have the right to operate anywhere within the Confederation – which by definition means within the territory of member governments, sovereign possession is respected. Star systems that do not fall within the territory of a member government or where the local government is incapable of projecting power to control the star system, are protectorates of the Confederation as a whole. If the local member government develops the capability to control its own star system, protectorate status is lifted and the system becomes sovereign territory of the government.

Government Types

All Confederation worlds are governed by the Solomani Party but local Parties can vary considerably and may govern in widely differing ways. In most cases Party membership is wholehearted and the world can be considered to be governed by the Party. However, sometimes a world government pays only lip service to the Cause. These are governments first and local Parties second. So long as the rules are followed and the end result is beneficial to the Confederation as a whole, a lack of enthusiasm for the Cause is tolerated. However, governments that have joined the Party are far more likely to be suspected of disloyalty than those where the Party has formed a government.

The following are examples of how the Party structure can be adapted to different situations. Other configurations are possible, some of them quite bizarre.

None (0): The Solomani Party is not a significant presence on this world and the world does not send representatives to the Secretariat. Government code 0 often represents government by a single family or extended family. Usually the world is a protectorate of the Confederation.

Company/Corporation (1): Many large corporations in the Confederation are owned directly by the Solomani Party. Some of these are powerful enough to control entire worlds. A Solomani corporate state could also be a world-corporation, in which the entire governmental apparatus is handled by a corporate body.

Participating Democracy (2): On most Solomani worlds only a minority participate in the Party but this is not always the case. It is possible for almost every adult citizen may be an active Solomani Party member, with the Party making its decisions through open votes, referendum or consensus. The Party runs everything but everyone runs the Party.

Self-Perpetuating Oligarchy (3): Leadership of the Solomani Party is limited to an elite that selects its own members by techniques such as heredity, property or monetary qualification, or through rigged elections. The oligarchy stays in power by distributing favours to the masses or by oppression. In many cases an existing oligarchy has joined the Party in order to remain in charge and may not be all that fervent in its belief in the Solomani Cause. This classification can also include worlds where a very small minority of pure Solomani dominate a large majority of uplifted animals or mixed-race humans or non-Solomani.

Representative Democracy (4): It is quite possible to have a representative democracy even in a one-Party state. Any Solomani citizen can register as a Party member. As long as the basic concepts of the Solomani Cause remain sacrosanct, anyone can join the Party and through it run for an elected office. A world government can have multiple political parties so long as all of them are members of the Party. Thus the world is governed by the Party but the population get to decide what aspects are emphasised and what policies are followed – or at least how they are followed. Even if there is only one Party, multiple candidates can stand informally to represent the interests of particular factions, interest or regions. In worlds with this sort of government there are few barriers to entry into politics aside from money.

Feudal Technocracy (5): Solomani Party positions are integrated into a hereditary technocratic leadership. A technocratic position will be associated with a parallel Party position – for example the hereditary post of Power Engineer for a given city may come with chairmanship of that city's Party supervisory committee for electrical utilities

Captive Government (6): This may indicate the world is a possession of a multi-world member government or that it is a protectorate directly administered by the Solomani Confederation's military or bureaucracy.

Civil Service Bureaucracy (8): This follows the mode of many old Terran one-party bureaucratic states. There may be a façade of democratic elections but the bureaucracy or public service unions are really in charge and are synonymous with the Solomani Party. Obtaining government positions and promotions may require attending the proper schools and passing state-run exams. Political reliability, seniority and social connections are important but competence and expertise are also rewarded; it remains possible to advance through merit alone.

A variant of this is the self-perpetuating bureaucracy where the Solomani Party-run government exists only to increase its own reach and power. Government positions and promotions are mainly allocated through a politicised system based on Party lists maintained by senior ministers. Administrative ranks in the Solomani Party have direct parallels in government positions. For example, the chairperson of the Solomani Party for a given city is likely to also be that city's mayor or city manager. A rubber-stamp representative democracy may still exist with either the Party choosing who is on the list of candidates or the elected offices being nothing but puppets for a permanent Party bureaucracy. The government does not exist to serve the people, although it may provide them with a very agreeable lifestyle.

Charismatic Dictator (10): The local Solomani Party's leader enjoys overwhelming popular support from the masses, giving him dictatorial powers. The dictator often combines a Party position and a government title. For example, world president for life or a hereditary queen will also come with the position of leader of the planetary Solomani Party. In the Solomani Confederation a charismatic dictatorship often retains popularity through ensuring direct control of patronage appointments, establishment of a cult of personality and skilful media manipulation.

Non-charismatic Leader (11): As above but the leader or their successor has lost popular support despite retaining a grip on the Party and the world. This can also indicate a system where senior position in the Party (and thus senior government posts) are hereditary or subject to a caste system. Non-charismatic leaders rely heavily on direct control of the military and security forces, and/or media. Their subordinates remain loyal for fear that they will lose their own power, privileges and possibly their lives if the dictatorship falls. Dictators will often attempt to blame problems or unrest on external or internal 'enemies of the Solomani Cause'.

Charismatic or Non-Charismatic Oligarchy (12): A small group of senior Solomani Party officials form a political bureau that assigns all government appointments. These officials hold supreme executive power for life and can dominate the party and government by doling out appointments to favoured clients in the military and civilian sphere. As with dictatorships these regimes are often the loudest public supporters of the Solomani Cause. A powerful enemy such as the Imperium, Aslan or Hivers – whichever is closest or seems most threatening – provides scapegoats for any domestic problems and a way to demonise opponents of the regime.

Religious Dictatorship (13): This usually indicates that a religion that exercises theocratic control has accepted the Solomani Cause as divinely inspired – for example, through a belief that the Solomani are God's chosen people. Thus, members of theocracy will also be Party members and Party members must be part of the ruling religious hierarchy. It is also possible that there is no religion as such and instead a particular faction of the Solomani Movement itself has mutated into an authoritarian 'secular religion'. On such a world the Party may intrude into all aspects of life, other religions may be banned, the study of political dogma – often the writings of a particular Solomani Party philosopher – may take the place of political discourse, literature and spirituality.

Law Level
On Solomani Confederation planets local laws often give preferential treatment to Solomani Party members. Members are likely to be able to skirt certain laws and government or business regulations and be treated more respectfully by police.

As a general rule the Law Level of a Confederation world is treated as one level lower than its actual value when applied to a Party member in good standing. This may be blatant, with signs in shop windows saying certain goods can only be sold to Party members or it may be an unwritten custom. In such a case a Party member might still be stopped by police when doing something illegal but upon producing Party identification the Traveller finds the police lose interest in the situation and go looking for some 'real' crimes to deal with.

Tech Level
The Solomani Confederation lags somewhat behind the Imperium in technological development. Confederation worlds range up to TL14. Any TL result greater than TL14 should be reduced to TL14. This does not apply to Solomani-populated worlds within the Imperium itself. The Confederation has been pouring resources into improving its technological infrastructure and the educational quality of major centres. It is predicted that several major worlds such as Home will have achieved TL15 within a decade.

Military Bases and Express Boat System
Solomani Confederation military bases exist on important or strategic worlds throughout the Solomani Confederation. There are no scout bases although some naval bases may be oriented toward exploration, survey or x-boat system operation.

The Confederation does not have an x-boat system. It inherited one when its worlds seceded but over time it has moved to a system of couriers and contracted mail ships. The primary routes are marked on the map the same way as x-boat lines but the chances of encountering actual x-boats in service are slim. A few are still retained, serving links between specific worlds but as they wear out these boats are being cannibalised to keep the others running. Eventually, the express boat will become extinct in the Confederation.

The bases of Home Forces are not shown on the subsector maps, since almost all worlds have them in one form or another. Any Solomani Confederation world with a Class A, B, C or D starport can be expected to have Home Forces bases commensurate with its population and TL.

Travel Codes
The Solomani Confederation retained the Amber and Red Zone code system when they broke away from the Imperium. Publication of Amber and Red Zone codes are controlled by the Solomani Ministry of Information with input from other Confederation bodies.

Red Zone worlds are interdicted by the High Council or sometimes the Confederation Navy. The former is usually as a matter of state security; the latter is likely to be temporary in order to contain a dispute or long-term to protect a sensitive installation. Red Zones are normally enforced by the Navy but may also have a SolSec presence. Some interdictions are monitored solely by SolSec. The Solomani Confederation has no equivalent of Imperial Scout Service interdiction to safeguard developing cultures.

The most common reason for interdiction is to quarantine a spreading plague or to blockade a rebellious planet that has overthrown its own Solomani Party. Confederation Navy warships will generally warn off all vessels approaching within 100 diameters of the interdicted world and fire on any ship getting closer than 10 diameters. Ships are usually still allowed to jump into the system or refuel at gas giants. In rare instances interdiction may be established to protect something of strategic importance such as an Ancients site or strategic research station or to keep secret an event whose revelation would cause damage to the Solomani Cause. Reasons for Red Zoning are rarely made public.

Amber Zone worlds are simple travel advisories indicating hazards. Due to the politicised character of media in Confederation space the designation of an Amber Zone is quite untrustworthy. It can indicate there are hazards or that the world is being punished for deviancy from the Solomani Party orthodoxy. On the other hand, it is not unusual for worlds that really should be classed as Amber Zones to instead muster political pressure through allies in the Secretariat to escape this stigma. Many worlds that are suffering from violent political upheaval, disasters, ongoing insurgencies or even civil war can go unmarked. The Imperium cautions Travellers visiting Solomani space to instead rely on commercial intelligence agencies, independent media or reports from recent visitors. Many Solomani travellers do the same.

Starports
Starports in the Confederation are similar to those in the Imperium but with a few key differences. Like the Imperium there is usually a main port accompanied by a startown, often the planetary capital, which is a

cosmopolitan city or town near the port. Ports have the familiar division into groundside downport and sometimes an orbital highport.

The most important distinction is that the Solomani Confederation itself does not claim territorial control over the world's starport. There is no distinct extraterritoriality or 'extrality' line around the port; it is the sovereign territory of the member government. Starships themselves enjoy a degree of extrality but once outside the vessel a visitor is subject to the laws of the world they are on.

There are a few localised exceptions to this; all Solomani Confederation military bases, SolSec office buildings and certain Solomani Confederation government installations such as the capital region on Home are all legally considered Confederation territory.

A Solomani Confederation starship is registered at a particular world within the Confederation. This governs the laws that apply aboard it, in addition to Confederation law. The vessel's homeworld also has the obligation to regulate and ensure its safe and lawful operation; for example, its homeworld's labour regulations would apply.

Any starship or spacecraft in the territory of a member government is subject to its jurisdiction and any ship in Confederation space is subject to its laws. Vessels are generally permitted to carry locally prohibited items within the jurisdiction of a member government providing they do not attempt to offload them. A few governments enforce zero-tolerance policies but for the most part starships are considered the territory of their owners and subject to the laws of their world of registry. This applies even when the vessel is standing on the landing pad at a starport – what is in its hold only becomes the business of local law enforcement agencies if it is offloaded. Indeed, many ports allow mildly illegal goods to be transferred to other vessels providing the correct procedures are followed. However, if the goods can be proven to be destined for the member government's territory penalties will apply and some governments require a very low standard of proof in such matters.

For example, a starship may be carrying goods such as alcohol or weapons that are legal on its homeworld but not on the world whose port it is visiting. The very nature of the passengers or crew themselves might also violate other laws. For example, the world that is being visited may require all adult males shave their heads and wear black robes, or ban non-Solomani from marrying Solomani or owning personal weapons. A starship or its occupants might find itself in violation of any number of strange local laws when it lands.

Since this causes problems for interstellar trade the Charter of the Solomani Confederation avoids states that a member government has only 'limited and conditional jurisdiction' aboard a visiting starship. Translated from a mountain of legal precedent this means the vessel is considered a mobile piece of its registered homeworld's territory and thus subject to its homeworld's laws rather than local law. However, there is a limit to this sovereignty. If the local world's authorities – usually its starport police or Home Forces – have evidence the ship's occupants are engaged in activities that would violate local laws in the world beyond outside the ship, they can impose their legal jurisdiction over it. This means that the world's police or military can exert their legal powers to stop, board, storm or search the vessel, arrest crew or passengers and confiscate cargo. However, if they do so without proper cause, they can be sued under Solomani Confederation law and that suit would likely be backed by the government of the starship's homeport.

This also means that if a fugitive from local law such as a political dissident boards a ship, the police or military are legally able to pursue them if they are willing to risk a possible dispute with another Confederation world. Again, this is in stark contrast to the Imperial practice, where any jurisdiction would stop at the starport unless the fugitive was also in violation of Imperial law. The protection a starship receives from local authorities depends in part on where it is registered. A starship registered to a high-population, high-TL world like Cthonia, Turin or Home commands more respect than one registered to a low-population backwater planet so insignificant it cannot send its own delegate to the Secretariat. Rivalries can also affect this, sometimes resulting in harassment or seizure of cargo on extremely flimsy pretexts. Free traders usually prefer to register their ships out of home ports on main worlds with few enemies, good starports and moderate Law Levels.

FOREIGN POLICY

The Solomani Confederation is bounded on three sides by great interstellar powers. The Aslan Hierate is on its spinward frontier, the Imperium is located to coreward and the Hive Federation lies on its trailing border.

Directly to rimward of the Solomani Confederation is a large open frontier area that contains a mix of unexplored or lightly settled systems and scattered pocket empires. This region – the rimward frontier – is ripe for future Solomani expansion. The rimward frontier is considered to be vulnerable to Aslan and Hiver influence but to hold the manifest destiny of the Solomani people. Some Solomani thinkers maintain that the root cause of Solomani-Imperial conflict was the Imperium's reluctance support aggressive rimward expansion. In any event the Solomani Confederation Navy, various Solomani Party organisations, merchant consortiums and private corporations are actively engaged in exploration, scientific research, trade and diplomacy in the region. Solomani like to believe their eagerness to open up a new frontier region is what differentiates them from the timorous, inward-looking Imperium.

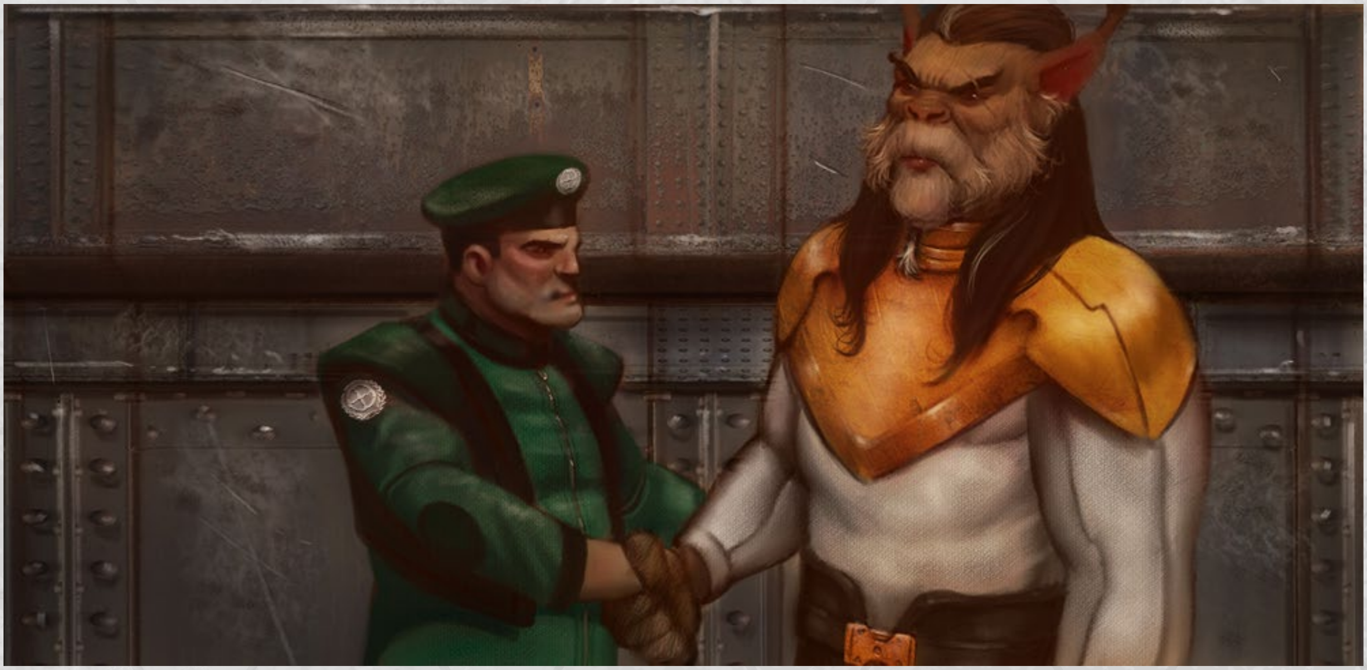
The Hive Federation

Relations between the Solomani Confederation and the Hive Federation are cool but cordial, with formal diplomatic envoys, trade missions and private commerce going back and forth on a constant basis. The Hivers are considered a strategic competitor but not at present an enemy. There have been military conflicts between Solomani and Hiver client states on the rimward frontier and in Spica. So far there have been no direct engagements between Solomani Confederation and Hive Federation armed forces save for a few instances involving military advisors serving in client state forces. The Hivers appear to value the Solomani as a counterbalance to the Imperium. On balance the Solomani would rather the Hivers were not there but have learned to live with them. They provide a useful trading partner and a source of TL15 imports outside Imperial control.

The Hive Federation is made up of many different races, led by the Hivers themselves. Hivers are proud of their ability to manipulate others and are without doubt convinced they have every right to place themselves above the other races of their Federation. In that, alien as they are, the Hivers are surprisingly similar to Solomani humans. Hivers and their subordinate races from the Hive Federation tend to attract a lot of attention when they venture beyond the usual turnaround points but little of it is hostile. It is more that aliens are uncommon in the Confederation so seeing a group of them – often from a variety of species – is a novelty. Solomani who travel in the Hive Federation are often bewildered at first but soon come to understand the grand order of things. To many, the Hive Federation is what the Solomani Confederation might have been if more of the prindigs had been at a useful Tech Level.

The Aslan Hierate

The treaty that ended the Aslan Border Wars – the Peace of Ftahalr – was signed between the four large Aslan clans and the Imperium. This established a buffer zone but the Solomani Confederation does not consider itself bound by the treaty and neither do a number of minor Aslan clans. Many Solomani worlds in the spinward sectors of the Confederation have been feuding with the Aslan for over a 1,000 years. The border worlds have a rich and bloody history of victories, defeats, atrocities and betrayals and they remember them all. Some are descended from Terran colonials forced from their worlds into exile by Aslan advances. Yet they have also had to live with the Aslan as neighbours for just as long, trading and even allying with them against both other



Aslan and even rival Humans. This complicated history is far older than the Solomani Confederation and often trumps considerations of Solomani Party ideology.

The Aslan Hierate and the Solomani Confederation are natural rivals. Both great powers are expansionist, relatively youthful in interstellar terms and have a strong sense of their own innate racial superiority and warrior prowess. The Aslan Hierate is significantly larger than the Solomani Confederation but somewhat less technologically advanced and possesses a less unified Navy. Both have other rivals on their borders that prevent them deploying their full strength against each other. At the same time neither considers the other to be an existential threat. The disputes between them are significant at the sector level but do not reach the same ideological intensity as the conflict between the Solomani Confederation and Imperium. Instead they are simple concerns over territory, honour and the control of trade routes.

This creates a paradoxical situation where minor Solomani-Aslan conflicts are much more frequent than those with the Imperium just because there is less risk of massive escalation. The majority of the Solomani Confederation's Secretariat have no interest in an all-out Aslan war; likewise the majority of Hierate clans do not want war with the Confederation. Every few years there is a small but bloody border flare-up involving subsector-level military forces, planetary troops and mercenaries. A minor world or two changes sides. This is punctuated by temporary ceasefires, trade agreements and skirmishes involving 'pirates' and 'raiders' and then it all heats up again in a few years' time. Although fighting can be intense for the worlds that are involved, both interstellar governments can afford to accept temporary loses and try again when the time is right rather than fight to the death.

The Third Imperium

The Solomani Confederation came close to fighting to the death with the Imperium. It may have learned its lesson but its people do not consider true peace with the Imperium to be possible as long as the Imperium holds Terra. Official relations between the Solomani Confederation and the Imperium are chilly. The Imperium does not officially recognise the legitimacy of the Solomani Confederation. The Solomani Confederation considers the Imperium to be occupying much of its territory against the wishes of its citizenry and has vowed to never accept the loss of its old capital and homeworld. No formal peace treaty exists on a state to state level.

The Confederation openly states that it has the right to provide support for Solomani resistance movements within the Imperium, although in practice the Confederation as a whole does not do so. Instead, the Confederation mildly condemns those of its member governments who do provide assistance whenever the Imperium protests but at the same time asserts their right to continue. So long as the situation remains low-key the Imperium accepts this as a safety valve that may prevent tensions escalating… and supports anti-Confederation dissidents in much the same way.

The Confederation attempts to maintain military forces strong enough to deter Imperial aggression and capable enough to assume the offensive if the right opportunity arises. The Secretariat is under no illusions that the Imperium would not annex and 'pacify' the Confederation – or at least parts of it – if it were able to do so cheaply enough.

This state of cold war complicates official diplomatic relations. What replaces them are a series of agreements and working relationships based on the armistice that ended the Solomani Rim War. These relationships primarily exist between high levels of the Solomani Confederation Navy and the Imperial Navy and between the governments of border worlds. They function in part because the Solomani and Imperial Navies have significant professional respect for one another despite the fortunes of politics and war.

Unofficial relations with the Imperium blow hot and cold. The Solomani Rim War returned a large part of the Solomani Sphere to Imperial control. Despite the fact that the Imperium does not formally recognise the Solomani Confederation and the fact that the Solomani Confederation does not formally recognise Imperial sovereignty over any portion of the Solomani Sphere, an informal detente has been in effect since the armistice of 1002. This detente has not yet reached the point of formal diplomatic relations but merchants from both states routinely cross the border.

In particular the commercial interests of the Solomani Rim have significantly improved day-to-day relations. The Imperium is now once more the Solomani Confederation's largest trading partner. Tens of millions of Solomani tourists and business travellers visit the Imperium every year. The delegates of those rich Solomani Confederation border worlds that are growing fat on foreign trade form a powerful moderate bloc within the Secretariat. Their power increases because the Confederation charter awards votes based on economic contributions and as trade increases the moderate bloc's power also improves.

Despite this thaw in relations the Imperium is still considered a rival or enemy by the majority of the Solomani Confederation's people. Every pure Solomani child grows up learning the Imperium is a threat. Exiles and refugees from worlds on the Imperial side of the border have significant political power on many Solomani frontier worlds. They have popular organisations that support anti-Imperial guerrilla and terrorist groups operating on Imperial-occupied worlds.

When Imperium's authorities manage to trace support for terrorist or guerrilla attacks back to Solomani Confederation worlds they will retaliate in various ways. The most common punitive measures take the form of temporary trade sanctions that close border systems or starports to Solomani visitors or ships or which embargo export of TL15 goods to the Solomani Confederation. The Imperium also counters with active measures such as covert military or intelligence operations against Solomani targets. The Confederation retaliates with similar tactics of its own.

Non-Aligned Worlds

The Confederation's borders encompass scores of non-aligned worlds. Prior to the Solomani Rim War the Confederation's policy was to use diplomacy, economic carrots, colonisation, political subversion or naked force to absorb all non-aligned worlds within the Solomani Sphere. The Solomani Rim War halted this effort before it could be completed. With the Solomani Confederation's ideology and military power weakened, many sectors of the Confederation continue to contain worlds that either were never absorbed into the Confederation or which broke away from it.

This not considered an ideal situation but the post-war consensus of the Confederation government and Solomani Party has been to not bite off more than it can chew. The Confederation is willing to tolerate the existence of non-aligned states within its boundaries until such time as it becomes cost-effective or politically desirable to absorb them. The same tactics of economic, political and military pressure are used but the Solomani Confederation is willing to take a slow approach where worlds pose no immediate threat.

Sometimes even willing worlds have not been permitted to join the Confederation because factions within the Secretariat representing existing member states believe the cost of integration is too high. This is likely if the world has both a low Tech Level and high population, for example, or if its population has a high proportion of non-Solomani. Such a planet may be deemed to be a net drain on Confederation resources rather than a useful prize. Politics can also affect the decision. The Solomani Party is factionalised and it is in the interests of each faction to ensure that when a non-aligned world joins the Confederation it has an ideologically-compatible government and Party. The Solomani Party, SolSec, the military or various member state governments may sabotage a world's attempts to join the Confederation in order to weaken a rival Solomani faction. For example, the absorption of a newly-contacted Terran colony with a large, politically-active Dolphin population could be opposed by purist factions that wish to limit the political power of uplifted animals.

The Confederation at a Glance

The Solomani Confederation is made up of member governments, all of which have jurisdiction over their own territory. Typically this is their entire solar system but can be a region of a balkanised planet or several systems in the case of a multi-world government.

Member governments can take any form but must accept the authority of the central Confederation government and will probably subscribe to the shared ideology of the Solomani people. Some members do not but align themselves with the Confederation and accept its ways for their own reasons.

Alliances (and wars) between member governments are permitted unless some circumstance endangers the best interests of the Confederation as a whole. Likewise, member governments have their own military and naval forces, security services and law enforcement apparatus.

Overall, the ideal of the Solomani Confederation is that member populations are generally free to follow their own path but have responsibilities to the Solomani people as a whole. It exists to ensure help is there when needed and to protect the Solomani people from outside interference. Some would phrase that as 'the purpose of the Confederation is to keep the Imperials out of your backyard'. Simplistic as it is, this statement is not entirely incorrect.

CHAPTER-FOUR

SOLOMANI SOCIETY

Solomani are ordinary humans. In most respects the people of the Solomani Confederation are similar to their estranged cousins in the Imperium, with whom they share a common language and cultural history. They are more likely to retain customs or languages traceable to pre-star flight Terra than the average Imperial.

Solomani see themselves as independent, proud, self-reliant and culturally diverse, with a strong sense of individualism. They emphasise their dynamism compared to more tradition-bound races, seeking to push boundaries, find new solutions to old problems and open frontiers.

Solomani in the Confederation have cultural quirks that distinguish them from other humans and also from most ethnic Solomani within the Imperium.

Racial Pride: Solomani are convinced of the distinctiveness and accomplishments of their race. This can range from a quiet pride in Solomani accomplishments to an arrogant expression of racial superiority over non-Solomani in general and Vilani or Imperials in particular.

Nationalism: Solomani also believe in the pre-eminence of their individual worlds and of the Confederation as a nation. Their worlds share a common political ideology, racial pride and sense of struggle that combines to make the average Solomani more patriotic than the average Imperial citizen. It is true that the Imperium fosters strong patriotism amongst its nobles and those who join its uniformed services but the Solomani will wave the flag at every opportunity and through all levels of society.

Every Solomani municipality has statues honouring the ancient pioneers who colonised their world from Terra, the politicians and militants who struggled to establish the Solomani Party and the war heroes who died fighting for the Cause in the Solomani Rim War. Schools foster national pride from an early age and corporations employ patriotic symbolism to sell their products. The average Solomani grows up with the sense that his society 'just plain does it better' and other races should be looking up to them. Dissent is normally expressed as disappointment in failing to live up to the ideal, rather than criticism against the system or Confederation itself. There is a strong sense of 'my nation, right or wrong'.

Love of Mother Terra: Solomani tend to have an emotional and almost spiritual connection with Terra, the ancient home of humankind. It is commonly held in the Confederation that a true Solomani should make a pilgrimage to Terra's blessed soil at least once in their lifetime, tensions with the Imperium permitting. An interstellar lottery run by the Solomani Party pays for travel tickets for lucky winners. Several Solomani religions treat Terra itself, or certain parts of it, as holy land. That Terra is under Imperial occupation is a festering wound in the Solomani psyche, exploited by nationalist factions in their Solomani Party to unite the population in seeking its liberation.

Nature's Bounty: Unlike other human races, which were transplanted to alien ecologies, the Solomani evolved on a world where the animals and plants were their biological relatives. Solomani tend to be more comfortable using and breeding domestic animals as working beasts, companions or livestock than other races of Humaniti. The close bonds Solomani have developed over tens of thousands of years with animals like dogs, cats or horses stand out when compared to other human races. Every other Solomani household seems to have a beloved pet. On worlds with appropriate environments and either poor roads or a low TL, Terran horses, mules and camels are common. Aboard Solomani free traders, a ship's cat will be a valued part of the crew, occasionally startling non-Solomani passengers when it suddenly streaks down a corridor in pursuit of rats or non-terrestrial vermin.

The Solomani are also unusual among other human races in using genetic engineering to enhance the intelligence of some of their animals to make them better partners. Non Solomani humans are sometimes puzzled as to which Terran animals are supposed to be treated as pets or partners, which are livestock and which are pests or wild animals.

Solomani tend to appreciate a more diverse array of natural cuisine than most other human races, who could only digest some of their worlds alien flora and fauna – and then only after extensive processing. Over thousands of years, the most hardy and popular Terran grains, vegetables, fruits, fungi, spices, meat animals, poultry and fish have spread across Charted Space. However, Solomani worlds closest to Terra are more likely to have been seeded with a greater variety of earthly crops and food animals or even extensively terraformed to ensure their ecologies are teeming with transplanted terrestrial life.

Solomani are likelier to be discriminating gourmands, to prefer fresh rather than processed foods and be comfortable working in or owning farms, fisheries or ranches. Their cities are filled with a bewildering array of restaurants and food markets. It has been said, not entirely in jest, that the real reason the Imperium insisted on capturing Terra was to ensure a supply of its famous wines and coffees for the Emperor's table.

Mild Paranoia: The Solomani see their Confederation as having no friends; instead they are surrounded by competitors and enemies. Due to the peculiarities of the political system, Solomani also tend to assume people are watching them, so are careful of what they say in public or at work. On the other hand, many Solomani cities have less street crime and fewer homeless drifters.

Pioneer Spirit: Solomani Confederation citizens celebrate the pioneer spirit of Terra. Schoolbooks make much of the way the ancient Vilani Empire doomed itself by halting its exploration and not expanding that one extra parsec to discover the Terrans just beyond its border. The Solomani are pleased to have an open frontier on their rimward border. Support for colonisation projects and long-range exploration missions are high. The Solomani Party claim that the Imperium once celebrated these values but lost them in the period after the Civil Wars. A society either grows or it dies; the Imperium is dying.

Romanticism: The loss of Terra and other worlds in the Solomani Rim War was a serious blow to the Solomani sense of superiority, yet did not destroy it. Decades have dulled the initial pain. The epic struggle of the Rim War culminating in the fall of Terra that bought time for the escape of Wolfe's grand fleet has now been romanticised into a narrative of heroic bloodshed in which outnumbered Solomani fought gallant rear-guard actions and last stands, their sacrifice saving the rest of the Confederation from destruction.

The Imperium's success is popularly attributed to its sheer size; it is obvious that a big enough mob can eventually pull down any single fighter, no matter how skilled they are. The sacrifices during wartime and the efforts to rebuild afterward also serve as a moral lesson for the current generation, who are encouraged to emulate the heroes of the past.

Sport: The Solomani love of competitive sports and games is typical of many species but Solomani tend to take enthusiasm to extremes, even when they are mere spectators. The Solomani Party spends considerable tax resources on training elite athletes for the honour of the Solomani Cause. The Olympic Games continued to be held every four years on Terra until the Solomani Rim War.

The Solomani Cause

The key difference between Solomani and Imperials is the widespread belief in the Solomani Cause. This philosophy's origins are discussed in the History chapter on page 20. It can be interpreted in several different ways, which lead to factional disputes. Its central precepts are:

- All of Humaniti are exceptional, as demonstrated through their wide diffusion through Charted Space and their control of the greatest and most powerful of interstellar civilisations. Humans are superior to other aliens.
- The Solomani were the first and true species of Humaniti, who evolved naturally on Terra. Their racial origin, as well as their culture and historical achievements make them superior to the other races of Humaniti.
- This superiority means the Solomani have a special manifest destiny. It is their duty to themselves and the universe to dominate Charted Space and eventually the entire galaxy.
- Intermingling with other human races threatens to dilute what makes Solomani special, both culturally and genetically. The Solomani destiny is best achieved through leadership of other races or failing that, the Solomani's own efforts.

The Solomani Movement and the Cause

The Solomani Movement is composed of all those who sincerely believe in the Solomani Cause, whether they are organised officially or not. This consists of the organised Solomani Party along with their disorganised or apolitical supporters. Probably about 25% of racial Solomani in the Solomani Sphere self-identify as part of the Solomani Movement. Many other Solomani agree with the Cause but do not actively support it.

The Solomani Movement do not usually claim their race is inherently smarter or stronger. Instead, they see its unique origin and successful history as demonstrating its superiority and destiny. The Solomani Movement uses evidence from biology, archaeology and history to reinforce their point but two central themes of the Solomani Cause are historical facts:

- Solomani are directly descended from the original human race native to Terra.
- Solomani have impressive achievements in the political and technical fields compared to other races. They developed jump drive on their own, overcame the Vilani Empire from a position of weakness, were instrumental in creating the Third Imperium and did found the Solomani Confederation – two of the most powerful states in Charted Space – not to mention successful smaller powers such as the Sword Worlds.

The fact-based argument does not make the claims of superiority true but it does mean they cannot be disproved as long as the Solomani continue to exist as a distinct people. The Solomani Movement counters critics who make reference to failures, such as their loss of Terra to the Imperium, by stating that these are a natural cycle of history. Their race has suffered defeats before, like the collapse of the Rule of Man, only to rise again. Each time the Solomani have suffered a major setback they return purified by the fires of adversity, learning from their mistakes and stronger than ever.

The Solomani Movement believe the only thing that can defeat the cause is the elimination of the Solomani as a distinct race. Since extermination is unlikely, the primary threat to the Solomani Cause is the dilution of the race's cultural and genetic heritage through mixing Solomani with other human races such as the Vilani. This is why participation in a mixed-race society such as the Imperium is considered an existential threat to the Solomani Cause and why hardcore Solomani advocate racial separatism.

Being a pure-blooded Solomani is seen by many to be a challenge rather than a birthright. The Solomani are not inherently better but have the potential to be. This translates as being dealt a very good hand in a poker game – it is still necessary to play the cards well and opponents may be very skilled. This idea leads to a generally respectful attitude towards outsiders – contrary to Imperial propaganda. After all, where is the glory in winning a game against no-hopers and clueless noobs?

Thus there is a real sense of responsibility to live up to the Solomani ideal of dynamism, inventiveness and bravery, which has created a self-fulfilling prophecy. The average Solomani is conditioned to be competitive and to try hard to outdo non-Solomani. Trying hard often leads to success or at least a better performance than someone who is just going through the motions. This in turn perpetuates the idea of Solomani superiority by creating a string of successes or at least performances that win the respect of others.

Stand With Me

The noblest expression of the Solomani ideal is the concept of 'Stand By Me'. A Solomani is not entitled to expect others to kneel before them, and should not in any case. Their destiny is far nobler; they are the leaders who help non-Solomani see what they could be. Their role is to show others how to get off their knees and stand on their own two (or more) feet in a turbulent universe. Naturally, the Solomani can expect to receive adulation and respect for providing this leadership. Their role is to elevate others to greatness and to stand among them as the first among equals.

As with other Solomani ideals, this attitude can lead to unpleasant places. Those who reject the help and inspiration offered will be despised and there is a tendency to assume that at least some non-Solomani are incapable of guiding their own destiny. The 'Stand With Me' ideal is positive when seen in the light of a teacher helping young children to learn to read and write – they are not to be despised for not knowing yet but instead respected for what they might do with the knowledge. A wealthy person who helps someone fund a business without looking down on the prospective business owner for not being rich yet is another example of this ideal at its best. Some Solomani look at it the other way round, however, and act more like entitled rich people towards the 'lower orders' whose only fault was not being born into wealth.

Advocates of this philosophy might say that the Imperial Nobility considers its members better than other citizens and assumes they have a right to lead based on an accident of birth. It is the same for Solomani, who were effectively born into the royal line of the human race.

There is a dark side to this sense of superiority, however. Coming second to a non-Solomani is an embarrassment, and some are motivated to assume their rivals cheated or that the situation was rigged against them. This can lead to the portrayal of some outsider groups as devious and untrustworthy, which creates the unpleasantly racist attitudes seen in some areas.

Races in the Confederation

The Solomani Confederation has an overwhelmingly human population, although not all humans in the Confederation are genetically Solomani.

Pure Solomani: The original human species that evolved on Terra. Pure Solomani make up about 80% of the population of the present-day Solomani Confederation. The percentage on individual worlds may vary considerably.

Mixed Human: The ordinary mix of Solomani and non-Solomani genetic heritage found throughout the Imperium. They form a lower middle class on many worlds near the Imperial border. Mixed humans are generally considered 'non-Solomani' by many Solomani and by Party dogma but their status can vary from world-to-world.

Non-Solomani Human: Most of these individuals are of Vilani blood or more commonly a mix of pure Vilani and one of the other subject races the original Vilani conquered. Non-Solomani population in the Confederation are concentrated in the parts of the Old Expanses and the coreward region of Alpha Crucis. They are usually, but not always, subject to significant discrimination and are the most likely to be involved in active resistance to Solomani control. Typically this is limited to low-level dissent but can include terrorism and guerrilla warfare.

Aslan: A few human worlds on the Confederation's spinward frontier have Aslan enclaves, the result of exchanges of population that took place in the Border Wars and afterward. Aslan enclaves exist at the sufferance of world governments and with the knowledge that there are some similar human enclaves on the other side of the border, so a modicum of mutual tolerance is required to avoid reprisal. Aslan citizens are valued for their usefulness in business relations with cross-border Hierate clans and their willingness to provide soldiers to serve in special mercenary formations. Outside of the spinward regions of the Confederation, Aslan citizens tend to be mistaken for foreign visitors, which usually gets them better treatment than other minorities.

Primitive Indigenous Aliens: Many intelligent species seem to spend hundreds of thousands of years at the TLO stage before they achieve the social organisation or technology needed to progress further. Thus, the odds favour encountering races that are still at a primitive level. Several such races exist in the rimward sectors of the Confederation who had the misfortune to be contacted by the Solomani Autonomous Region or Solomani Confederation. They were classed as primitive indigenous aliens or 'prindigs' for short. Solomani settlement of prindig homeworlds typically proceeded without much regard to the local population. There was rarely any malice but colonists simply arrived and took over whatever areas they pleased.

In some cases the prindigs were deliberately co-opted as workers. In others they were moved onto reservations. More commonly, the prindigs retreated from areas claimed by human settlers, typically into marginal land. Many of these areas were later declared as reservations but there are several worlds where the human population and the indigenous race generally stay apart without a formal arrangement in place. Attempts to rationalise relations with primitive indigenous species or to integrate them into the Confederation as productive citizens, have proceeded in fits and starts for centuries but only recently has a concerted effort been made.

During the Solomani Rim War diversion of population into the military created a need for cheap labour. To fill it the Colonial Office decided to embark on a policy in which some prindigs were given basic education and recruited as workers. In the process entire cultures were obliterated, the better to ensure assimilation into the lower levels of Solomani society. Prindig races that can manage human speech are educated only in Anglic; they are encouraged to adopt Solomani culture, dress and living standards as far as their species' physical capabilities and environment requirements can permit.

The six-limbed nocturnal Tadonga or 'Ding-Dongs' found a niche as assembly line and fast food workers; they have become the trademark of the ubiquitous Confederation-wide SolBurger chain. The docile and attractive humanoid 'Ladybugs' of Alpha Crucis are equally widespread in domestic service. The strong, fast-breeding Zarm and, despite some early racial unrest, the diminutive Kvaz or 'Chuckies' find gainful employment as agricultural day labourers throughout the Confederation.

Although the Colonial Office and SolSec's Integration Section attempts to facilitate assimilation, not all races have been successes. The Neozinga of Aldebaran resisted offers to relocate them during the Solomani Rim War; their attacks on human settlements led to extinction. The Gamopedes of Canopus, while peaceful, failed to adapt to a high technology lifestyle and stopped reproducing altogether. The aquatic Xabulamanti swarms are perhaps too alien to adjust to the concept of Solomani society and, under pressure from uplifted Dolphin colonists, they continue to decline. A similar fate could still befall the newly-discovered Sciapods, although a promising pilot programme in which their young are removed and raised under direct human supervision has a chance of succeeding.

Dolphins: Sentient Dolphins have been around for thousands of years and are considered citizens, although outside their own communities they have little representation in politics. The average Solomani likes uplifted Dolphins and sees them to be loyal junior partners in the Confederation. A significant minority of Solomani disagree and think of them as 'just smart animals' or even as unnatural freaks. There have been instances where established uplifted Dolphin pods have clashed with Solomani business or industrial interests over the control of fisheries or ocean pollution but these are rare. A liberal minority of Solomani even think Dolphins deserve higher status, as they evolved on Terra they may be as much Solomani as anyone. Those views are also outside the mainstream but gaining traction.

Apes: Similar attitudes to Dolphins apply but Apes tend to be stereotyped as a loyal, hard-working but mentally inferior worker class who can never be the equal of humans and should stay out of polite society. Only a few radical Solomani liberals advocate otherwise. Provided the Ape knows their place, Solomani tend to like them. There is a mild undercurrent of unease that Apes can 'revert' to dangerous animals if provoked; police or armed citizens faced with an angry uplifted Ape tend to shoot first and ask questions later; they will rarely get in trouble for excessive force. This overreaction has been fanned in recent years by persistent rumours of secret genetic experiments to create super-Apes or further enhance the intelligence of other great apes. Such 'genetic war' stories are dismissed as nonsense by most authorities.

Vargr: Attitudes towards the Vargr can vary considerably. Many Confederation citizens feel that that the Vargr should be a client race of the Solomani, since they are uplifted Terran animals. However, due to the distances involved there is little contact between Vargr and the average Solomani-in-the-street. Perceptions are distorted by the fact that the Imperial Navy has many Vargr personnel and Vargr were among the ground troops deployed in the Solomani Rim War. Media also plays a part in this twisted perception. 'Vargr corsairs' are popular in Solomani adventure dramas set in the Imperium as exotic pirate sidekicks to Solomani guerrillas or rebels fighting deep inside Imperial territory. The idea that a Vargr could rise high in Imperial society or even become a major noble is difficult for many Solomani to comprehend.

Other Major and Minor Races: There are relatively few non-humans living in the Confederation and their treatment can vary considerably. Some are the subject of prejudice and suspicion; others are treated as fellow citizens or respected visitors. An unusual alien might cause a stir of genuine curiosity – which might lead to the individual being pestered with silly questions – or possibly even fear. This is less likely close to major starports, where alien visitors are not all that uncommon. Where there are significant populations of non-humans, historical factors will dictate whether they are considered also-citizens or an underclass.

Racism, Bigotry and the Call to Greatness

Solomani society is undeniably racist. Non-Solomani are barred from joining the Solomani Party and thus unlikely to attain positions of power above a local level. However, the portrayal of Solomani as almost cartoon-like haters of anything that did not spring from the holy soil of Terra is highly inaccurate. It has suited the purposes of the Imperium to paint the Solomani as nasty racists and themselves as a diverse and welcoming culture. Popular media has done much to strengthen this impression, using the Solomani as convenient and easily hateable bad guys whose nefarious motives need little explanation.

The reality is more complex, however. The Solomani feel superior to all other branches of Humaniti but that does not translate to hate or malice. Likewise, aliens might be viewed with suspicion or even despised due to historical interactions but the average Solomani would find the idea of hating someone he had never met just because they were different as ridiculous as any Imperial citizen would.

To the Solomani, the situation is clear and simple. They are a little bit better than everyone else but that does not make anyone bad. Non-Solomani humans and non-humans are viewed on their merits; some are worthy and capable, others are not. The same applies to other Solomani – friendship and hatred are earned by deeds and words, not race or kinship. Indeed, the average Solomani does not expect anyone to treat them as if they are better just because they are a Solomani. They do, however, expect to be judged fairly for what they do and it is here that they prove their superiority.

Ingrained within the Solomani psyche is what might be called a ‘Call to Greatness’. Mediocrity is acceptable for other races but the Solomani are expected to excel. This applies to them as a people and as individuals. Solomani are taught that they are not better because they are Solomani; they must strive to be better than everyone else in order to be Solomani. Thus to be Solomani is a challenge that only the best could rise to and in so doing individuals and groups prove their worth.

To be born a Solomani means knowing from the cradle that you have enormous potential and that you are expected to fulfil it. This is the one factor that makes Solomani different from others – at least according to the Solomani. Others may or may not think they can succeed but the Solomani know they can. This does not mean everything will be easy or there will be no setbacks – striving for greatness is always dangerous. Nor does it mean non-Solomani are worthless. Others can achieve too and they must be fairly judged. Respect must be given to those who do well, if it is to be expected when the Solomani inevitably outdo the competition.

Thus to the Solomani, it feels like they have been dealt a good hand, perhaps a little better than the other players, but the game must still be played and defeat means disgrace. The other players at the table may well be very good but that is just a spur to attain even greater heights of achievement. After all, what is the point of winning a game if the opposition was a pushover? The respect of defeated players would mean nothing if they were inept buffoons. What, ultimately, is the point of being the best if nobody else is any good at all?

This attitude can engender a very positive outlook towards non-Solomani. Far from finding the worst in other races, those who aspire to this ideal seek the best – and then try to be better. However, it can manifest in darker ways. The mildest of these is the exclusion of non-Solomani from positions of power and governance. This is sometimes done to protect the Solomani way of life and sometimes it is due to an unspoken belief that only a Solomani can meet the challenge of leading other Solomani. This is most definitely racist, although not the spiteful hatred typically portrayed in popular media.

Some groups within the Solomani Confederation take the idea of superiority to a nasty extreme. These people have come to believe that since they are better than everyone else, nobody else matters. In truth such people exist in all societies but the institutional racism of the Solomani Confederation provides reinforcement to their beliefs and facilitates actions against those deemed to be inferior. In most areas there are policies against such behaviour but even so there does tend to be a bias in favour of Solomani over others. This can lead to injustice throughout society in terms of salary, law enforcement and social privileges. Active, direct harassment and victimisation is rare, however, and is the work of individuals or small groups rather than society as a whole.

Solomani are also taught that it is their destiny and responsibility to show others the way forward. This might be through example, inspirational actions or direct leadership. This attitude can be patronising or condescending but often the efforts of Solomani to elevate themselves above others is well-meant and, in an odd way, generous. By providing good governance the Solomani can put others on the right track, which is to everyone's benefit. Of course, this can easily slip over into contempt for those who are led or governed and challenges to authority cannot be tolerated.

Racist policies such as restricted immigration are part of a package of measures intended to preserve the purity of the Solomani people. As they see it, their potential for greatness is so important that it must be jealously protected. If the Solomani 'spark' was to be diluted or lost, the whole universe would be diminished. With no-one to lead the way or to show what could be done, mediocrity would reign. Again, this can easily slip over into a policy of not wanting 'inferiors' in society and those inclined that way are rarely challenged. Racist policies have at times resulted in opposition that led to conflict, with ill-feeling lasting long after the matter was settled. Thus the mistrust of some non-Solomani results not from deliberate racism but from historical events triggered by racist policies. To many the distinction matters little, especially those who want to paint the Solomani as oppressive tyrants.

The desire to maintain Solomani purity may stem from high-minded ideals but some of its effects are highly unpleasant. Many Solomani will subconsciously question the competence of a non-Solomani official and, since high positions and the salaries that go with them are denied to non-Solomani, they are often seen as inferior due to the social strata they occupy. Lack of social mobility and opportunity for advancement pushes a higher proportion of non-Solomani into crime or 'fringe' occupations. Thus Solomani are often used to seeing non-Solomani as inferiors. This can reinforce stereotypes and harden attitudes.

Overall, the society of the Solomani Confederation makes it easier for those who want to behave in a negative or hateful way towards non-Solomani but does not actively encourage it. Indeed, the message in general is 'they're good, but we're better!'. A typical Solomani would compare their own attitudes to those of a top-end athlete towards amateurs who do not train properly or a member of the Imperial nobility towards pretty much anyone who is not. These people would certainly say they were better than others but whether they might or might not deliberately put them down depends on the individual's personality.

If this complex situation can be neatly summed up, it is by the idea that the Solomani do not despise others for what they are; they simply feel they are better because they are what the others are not. The Solomani Confederation is certainly racist but it is motivated by snobbery rather than hate. In this, the Solomani would say they are no different to members of the Imperial nobility looking down on those who lack their refinement, wealth, education or power. Does not the Imperium have privileges for those who are of noble birth? Are there not barriers to entry into the nobility? Are there not jobs that can only be held by a noble?

The Solomani would say that they have no nobility because they are all noble and their nobility brings with it an obligation to lead, guide and sometimes correct those who need it. They might also say that the Imperials need to mind their own damned business. After all, their system is also based on the idea that some people are better than others due to their circumstances of birth. They just picked the wrong people.

Genetic Profiling

Confederation worlds of TL7+ routinely perform genetic testing of human infants either soon after birth or as a prenatal process, depending on the world. Standardised genetic testing practices and policies are developed on Home by the Ministry of Genetics and used throughout the Confederation. Similar testing is performed on any citizen of the Imperium or other foreign state who wishes to emigrate to the Solomani Confederation.

Although mass genetic testing is used to assess racial Solomani status, which can determine eligibility for Party membership, it is seen as a public good for other reasons. Determining a citizen's genetic profile is an important part of high-technology medicine. The testing also determines their subspecies, which is clearly listed on birth certificates and identity papers. The Solomani government takes pains to point out that some races have different medical issues or even different dietary needs and vulnerabilities to diseases, all of which are genetically linked.

This means that whenever a Confederation citizen does anything that requires showing official papers, such as applying for a weapon or pilot's license, opening a bank account, receiving medical treatment or passing through customs at a starport, their race will be apparent. On most high Law Level worlds, authorities and employers routinely check identity papers. This is true on Imperial as well as Solomani planets; the difference is that racial origin is always clearly indicated in Confederation documents. How this will influence reactions depends on the local culture, the dominant faction of the ruling Solomani Party on the planet and the personal attitudes of the individuals involved.

FASHION AND TRADITION

Citizens of the Confederation are taught that the cultures of Old Earth are the best in the universe… but there are rather a lot of them. Indeed, the worlds of the Confederation are far more culturally diverse than in most regions of the Imperium. Whilst the high-level institutions and services of the Confederation use the same symbology everywhere, member worlds tend to be heavily influenced by their founding cultures. This means that a world that was originally settled by South American colonists will look, feel and sound different to one whose original population came from West Africa.

These founding cultures have drifted over time and there can be significant differences between those of two worlds settled from the same region. This can cause disputes or become running jokes depending upon circumstances but on the whole the Solomani people find delight in their differences. One group may argue that their homeworld culture is the best of them all but they will still admire that of another Confederation world as being a 'proper Old Earth' society.

This attitude is at odds with the typical Imperial portrayal of the Solomani as bigots and xenophobes. The latter is partially fuelled by Solomani contempt for what they call 'bland Imperial consumerism'. From the Solomani point of view the Imperium is driven by corporate greed and everything is channelled towards a form that will most efficiently part citizens from their credits. This viewpoint is as skewed as the Imperial one regarding Solomani culture but there is a kernel of truth to it. Centuries of market research have given Imperial corporations clear indications of what is commercially successful and what is less so, with firms straying far from these most-efficient forms tending to be eclipsed by those who follow the rules for market success. This does tend to stifle variety, other than when something out of the ordinary is desirable for marketing purposes.

The Solomani people, on the other hand, are bombarded with propaganda about the Solomani Cause, which has the (probably unintentional) effect of counteracting or

Traditional Vilani vs. Imperial Culture

Most Confederation citizens feel that the Imperium is a cultural betrayal of the heritage of Old Earth. Terra produced so many wonderful and vibrant cultures but the Imperium suppressed them in favour of megacorporate marketing guidance. It now wants to do the same to the worlds of the Confederation through commercial imperialism.

Oddly perhaps, there is considerable respect and even admiration for traditional Vilani culture. The Vilani managed to get everything wrong, of course, with their stagnant empire and general lack of ambition, but their traditional culture has a lot to admire about it. It is an authentic human culture, which grew up in isolation and whilst it loses points for not being on Terra it produced great art and science, as well as a huge and long-lasting empire. Solomani respect that achievement and cite it as a cautionary tale – the Vilani were once outward-looking and driven. Once they stagnated and became dominated by their megacorporations their society was doomed.

According to this viewpoint, the collapse of the Vilani Imperium serves as a warning to those who would stop pushing the boundaries. The Imperium did not heed the warning but moved from a dynamic, Solomani-led stance to a 'Vilanified' corporate-dominated edifice of stagnation. Its collapse is inevitable.

To those that hold this view the Vilani are rather tragic people. They did well at first but lost their drive, probably because they were not Solomani. If they had been, they could have gone on expanding forever! There is much to be admired about the old Vilani culture and many warnings to be found in its history. As for the Imperium, it is a force for stagnation and entropy but the real enemy is not the Imperium itself; it is the megacorporations.

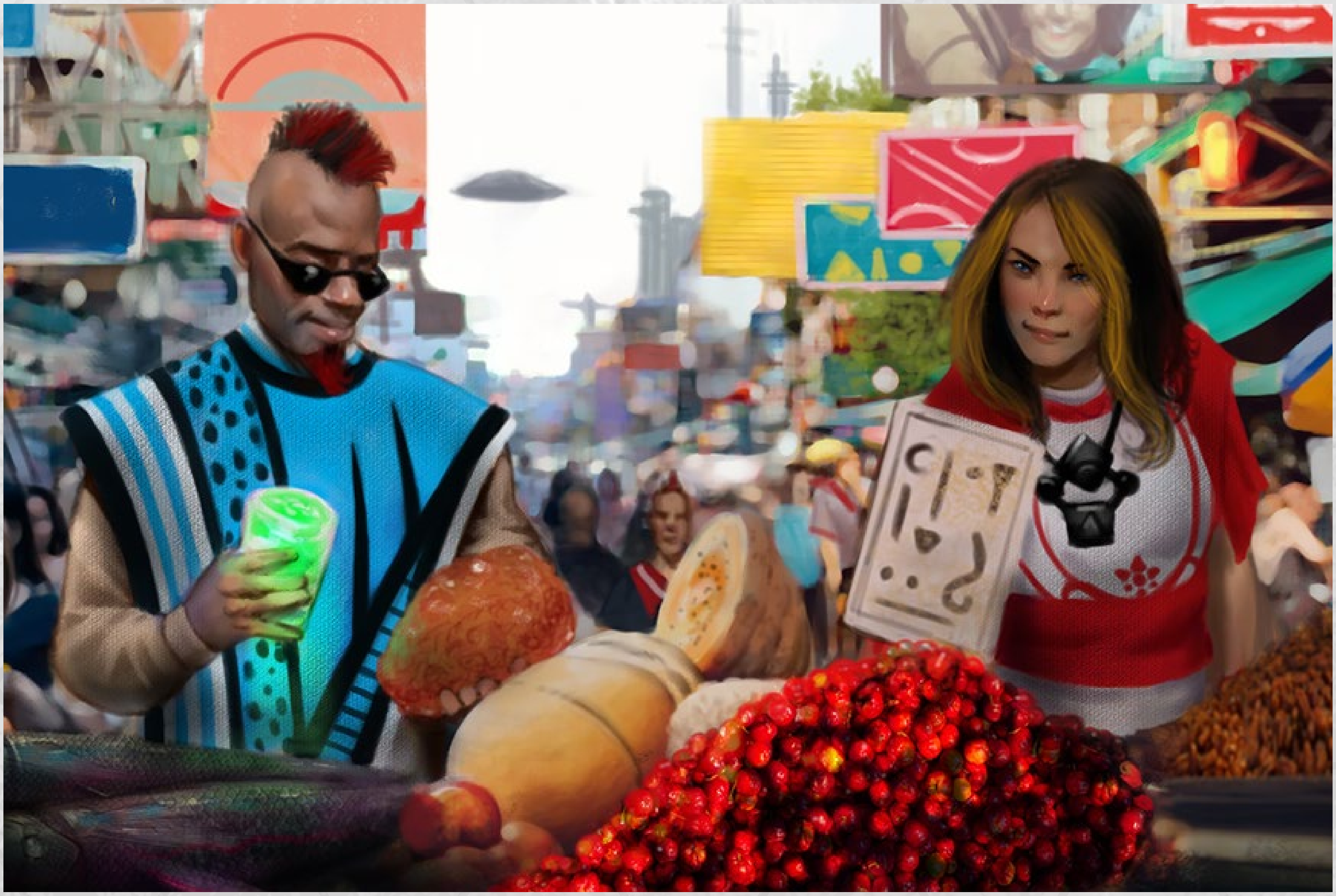
'Might as well hand it over to the megacorps' is a phrase used often, in various contexts, throughout the Confederation. It can mean a situation has become as bad as it can be or that a course of action would be as utterly unthinkable as abandoning vibrant Solomani culture for bland corporate consumerism. This attitude, as much as the tariffs and legislation imposed by the Confederation government, helps limit megacorporate influence in the Solomani Sphere.

even creating contempt for this move towards corporate conformity. Confederation citizens are constantly reminded that the many and varied cultures of their Confederation, coming as they do from authentic Old Earth roots, are better than the corporate blandness of the Imperium.

Thus when moving around the Confederation a Traveller will see a greater variety of cultural influences and styles than in Imperial space. In fact, this variance exists there too but the regions around starports – which is where Travellers tend to go – are subject to heavy corporate influences. Items of dress, art, music and food are all subject to considerable variation, although there are underlying Confederation-standard norms.

The ideal of maintaining purity of the Solomani bloodline is paralleled by the idea that homeworld cultures should be prized and protected. This has helped traditional art styles, signature dishes and odd turns of phrase survive despite centuries of inter-world contact. Naturally, cultural drift has ensured that what is considered the correct traditional way of serving a given dish or speaking Anglic might be different to what is thought to be traditional on another world but the Solomani people are taught that their many cultures are a source of strength and unity, and that they must respect the traditions of other member worlds. After all, they may have misremembered how to make panackelty but their wrong recipe is the product of an authentic Solomani culture. Even when they are doing it wrong, the other culture is doing it right – so long as they are Solomani of course.

This embracing of cultural drift as part of the wider Solomani culture is difficult for outsiders to understand. Many actually believe there was a 'panackelty war' in that millions died. In fact, this outrageous tale is a cultural fable which has been retold since ancient times. It concerns a dispute over how to make panackelty, a cheap dish of leftovers popular in parts of northern Europe, in which one state committed the heresy of adding sliced carrots and peas. Escalation left millions dead, cities blasted to ruin and SolSec with the job of expunging the incorrect recipe from history. SolSec's own information datasite has the 'correct' recipe posted without comment or context, on a high-profile page of its own. It appears that even SolSec has a sense of humour but the best joke is that some Imperial historians have inserted the Panackelty War into official histories of the Solomani People.



Overall, Travellers in the Solomani Confederation will know they are travelling. Starports are owned by the host world and reflect its unique flavour along with aspects of Confederation-norm society. Tailoring, food, music, architecture and design philosophy all differ from one world to the next. Generally, traditional garments are incorporated into modern dress styles, either wholesale or in a stylised aspect. On one world the traditional keffiah head-dress might still be worn as such; on another it has morphed into a rustic-looking tie worn even with formal businesswear. Elsewhere, bright patterning in traditional African styles might appear on traditional clothing or be incorporated into a particularly eye-catching three-piece suit.

SYMBOLOGY

The Solomani Movement and the Confederation use various symbols, most of which can be traced back to Old Earth.

Solomani Cross: This is the ancient astrological/astronomical symbol for Earth, a cross inside a circle. It symbolises the Solomani Party and until 870 was also the flag of the Solomani Autonomous Region. The Solomani Cross is employed on Party membership cards, stationary, vehicles and other paraphernalia and flown as a flag above Solomani Party offices. The colour can vary but the Party prefers a black cross on white. The Solomani Cross is also used in Solomani military insignia. In regions outside the Confederation where the Party is an underground movement or in areas of racial turmoil, it is used as pro Solomani political graffiti to mark neighbourhoods or terrorise non-Solomani by spraying it on houses and businesses.

Solomani Confederation Symbol: The interstellar government of the Solomani Confederation, the Secretariat, voted to adopt a modified Solomani Cross as a flag and symbol in 871. This is a Solomani Cross flanked by two olive branches, evoking symbols used by the old Terran United Nations and Terran Confederation. Various colours are used; government buildings and embassies may use this symbol in white on a sky blue field, known as the Flag of the Secretariat, while the military insignia is a black or low-visibility grey. The symbol distinguishes officials, agencies and facilities operated by the interstellar government from those operated by the Party or by individual worlds.

Rising Phoenix: In official ceremonies to mark the bicentennial of the Solomani Confederation in 1071 the Confederation unveiled another symbol, a stylised fiery bird, wings spread, arising from a solar hemisphere. This symbolised the Confederation's rebirth from the ashes of the Solomani Rim War. It also honoured the continuing efforts of Solomani resistance fighters within the Occupied Systems; guerrilla units on Terra used 'Phoenix' as a codename and rallying cry. The Rising Phoenix stands for the entire Solomani people as a unified nation. It is now used on official seals, stationary and stamps and emblazoned on government buildings, and is also the logo that appears on Confederation media channels. It is not used as an actual flag; the Confederation still flies the Flag of the Secretariat, while the Party continues to use the Solomani Cross. It is typically red on a white field.

Solomani Security Symbol: SolSec uses a stylised shield as its emblem divided into quarters by the horizontal and vertical lines of the Solomani Cross. Some variants add a circle, creating a Solomani Cross inside the shield – the imagery is obvious. In some areas outside the Confederation, a variety of false symbols are attributed to SolSec. These include an eagle with a Solomani cross in its talons and a shield pierced by a point-down sword with the Solomani Cross inside a star at the centre. These fake symbols seem to be a subtle propaganda campaign, allowing interested citizens to draw parallels between SolSec and some of the nastiest regimes in Terran history.

Military Insignia and Colours: The Rising Phoenix and Solomani Confederation symbol are incorporated into cap or shoulder rank badges. The Solomani Cross and Solomani Confederation symbols are both used as roundels to identify Solomani combat vehicles, aircraft and spacecraft. Warships typically use the Confederation symbol on the ship's side and the Solomani Cross on wings or fins. The Rising Phoenix is increasingly used as additional blazon to identify Confederation Navy vessels, especially capital ships and sometimes as a tail fin art on Navy fighters. Home Guard forces use the Solomani Cross along with local insignia, as the Rising Phoenix and Flag of the Secretariat are reserved for Confederation Army and Confederation Navy units

Transstar: The Solomani megacorporation uses a Solomani Cross that is encircled by 13 stars, one for each of the sectors that its routes extend into.

Worlds: Planetary governments may have their own flags and symbols. Some of these predate the Confederation but they have often been modified through Party influence to incorporate variations of the Solomani Cross, demonstrating their support for the Cause.

MARSHALS AND HEROES OF THE CONFEDERATION

In the Imperium, many nobles have an assumed right and responsibility to take control of any situation. This is backed by the Imperial Warrant system whereby the Emperor grants specific powers to an individual. In a few rare cases these powers are not limited or specific; the warrant holder is assumed to speak for the Emperor. In the Solomani Confederation, senior Party rank typically serves the same function. However, there are two statuses that can be conferred on someone who is not a senior Party member – in fact they do not have to be a Party member at all and may not even be Solomani.

Hero of the Confederation

The status of Hero of the Confederation is conferred upon those who have excelled beyond all measure. This may be in the military, scientific, commercial or diplomatic arena, or sometimes other areas of endeavour. The status of Hero is not awarded for being famous or popular – although that often comes with the territory – but is instead based upon services to the Solomani people and the Confederation as a whole.

Most Heroes have been military commanders, exploration leaders or scientists who made important breakthroughs. Exceptions include ordinary soldiers whose exploits inspired future generations and a doctor who stayed behind in a quarantined area to make the breakthrough that halted the Home Pandemic of 1067 at the cost of becoming fatally infected herself.

To qualify, service must be to the Confederation or Solomani people as a whole. There is also a political dimension to the award – Heroes are meant to inspire the people of the Confederation and thus the award is in part a social manipulation tool. Thus saving the liner carrying several members of the Secretariat will earn rewards and praise but not Hero status since the Confederation can survive without any given set of individuals. On the other hand, the leader of a resistance pocket which held out for months after the Fall of Terra was made a Hero of the Confederation even though he was ultimately defeated.

There must be an element of danger or risk involved in the exploit. The greatest composer of all time, or the most popular entertainment artist, might be important to the Solomani Cause but they cannot be named a Hero unless their work involves significant risk. Attempts to alter this stance have met with vigorous resistance – not least from existing Heroes of the Confederation.

A Hero is of course expected to be an example of the virtues that make the Solomani people great. Mavericks are not considered for Hero and those who use their status to pursue a different agenda are 'corrected' by various means. Very occasionally non-Solomani or even non-humans have been awarded Hero status. Some of these figures are controversial but most are simply people who did something exceptional on behalf of the Confederation.

Hero status comes with an annual pension and the award of an estate on a suitable planet or installation. A Hero can choose to live quietly in comfort if they wish but most continue to serve the Confederation in some way. Hero status has no legal powers or mandated benefits but no high-end hotel would fail to make the best rooms available to a Hero of the Confederation. Likewise the advice of such a figure is likely to be heeded. In game terms, a Hero of the Confederation would have little difficulty in getting an audience with the planetary government and would not normally be required to make a check for such actions. However, if the Hero wants something – such as the use of a starship – the request might not be granted. Essentially the Hero gets to ask for things that would not be considered if they came from an ordinary person but they still have to justify the reasoning or persuade the authorities to grant the request.

Marshals of the Confederation

The Secretariat has the power to confer Marshal status on an individual. Marshals have a status that Heroes do not – they are assumed to represent the Secretariat and can give orders to almost anyone. A Marshal can in theory walk into an admiral's office and demand a battleship for their personal use, which will be granted without question.

In practice, whilst an order from a Marshal will be obeyed, it will also be reported to the Secretariat and the local branch of SolSec. A Marshal's entourage will inevitably contain a number of SolSec enforcers who are empowered to arrest or even eliminate a Marshal who is acting against the best interests of the Confederation. The enforcer will then have to account for their actions, of course; shooting a Marshal is not a small matter.

Any given Marshal will have a field of expertise in which they are renowned. This is normally strategic, political or economic. Marshals are expected to have a broad grounding in other areas, sufficient to understand the wider issues, but are not expected to be able to perform at the highest level in all areas. Whilst a Marshal's powers are broad, they are normally assigned a field of endeavour or specific remit. Acting outside of this will raise questions but there is no reason why a Marshal with a background in economics cannot assume command of a naval force if necessary. If the Marshal is successful, the action is considered justified. If not, they will be called to account and face penalties up to summary execution for incompetently misusing their powers. One of the greatest responsibilities carried by a Marshal is the choice to intervene, advise or stay out of the way.

A Marshal is awarded a baton – an ancient Terran tradition – which in this case contains sophisticated encryption and communications equipment. A marshal's baton gives access to classified databases and in some cases can be used to unlock information the system's normal users did not know was there. A Marshal may be able to present a fleet admiral with data from their own system, which was not accessible or even known to the naval officials. This information does not belong to the navy; it is the property of the Confederation as a whole and offered when needed.

The relationship between a Marshal and current commanders in the area can be tricky. The Marshal will undoubtedly cause friction if they just walk in and assume command. The usual procedure is for the Marshal to take control of the situation but leave command of assets to the existing personnel unless they are clearly unfit. A Marshal is in any case wasted on micromanagement; their role is on a bigger stage. Thus a Marshal might be sent to improve the economic situation in a cluster of worlds but would not run around making deals. Instead they would meet with leaders and make sure they know what they are expected to do. At the same time the Marshal will find out what the local leaders need and use their powers to obtain it.

Marshals generally operate at the highest levels, on a big-picture basis. They can help solve small problems if local expertise is lacking but this is directed towards a high-level result. Marshals are empowered to make requests of anyone at all, other than the Secretariat itself. However, there is a hierarchy to the level of obedience required.

- Confederation assets (such as the Navy or the Ministry of Justice) are required to obey.
- Member Government assets (such as Home Forces or a world's treasury) are expected to obey and will face investigation by SolSec if they refuse.
- Private assets (for example individuals and companies) are advised to obey and may be investigated if they decline.

This hierarchy can be used to get things done even against opposition. A local shipping corporation can legally refuse a request from a Marshal but the Marshal can then order the Ministry of Justice to go through the company's affairs and prosecute over every tiny infraction, or they can apply pressure on local governments to impose tariffs on the company's ships. A request is thus usually a matter for a little bargaining and possibly some intimidation but ultimately the subject can take a stand if they feel the Marshal is acting inappropriately.

A Marshal who does misuse their powers, or who uses them in an incompetent manner, may be stripped of their status by the Secretariat. If there is no time, SolSec enforcers will take action. Officials are also permitted to query orders that will have obvious major consequences. Much depends upon context. For example, if a Marshal of the Confederation turns up unexpectedly and orders a fleet to undertake immediate offensive actions against the Imperium, the admiral commanding that fleet is empowered to request justification of that order. If, on the other hand, a Marshal has been given command of the region's forces by the Secretariat and the admiral is in possession of all the appropriate paperwork, the order may be obeyed without hesitation because it fits with the perceived situation.

Obviously, Marshals wield enormous power and with that comes a great responsibility. The status is not conferred lightly and Marshals are continually monitored by SolSec enforcers. Their decisions are scrutinised by the Secretariat and at any time a Marshal can be called to Home to account for their actions. On the other hand, Marshals are well paid and afforded the highest respect. They are empowered to walk into any situation, present their baton for authentication and assume whatever position they desire. Wielding such power and bearing such responsibility becomes tiring for most; it is common for a Marshal to return their baton after only a few years' service. This is the one decision a Marshal of the Confederation cannot be called upon to justify – they may stand down at any time. A Marshal's baton can be offered back to them if they are needed but the former Marshal has the right to refuse without giving a reason.

CHAPTER-FIVE

GOVERNANCE

The Solomani Confederation is the youngest of the great interstellar powers, founded a mere 234 years ago. Even so, this means it has survived longer than the legendary Terran Confederation from which it takes its name and some of its forms of government. Ten generations of citizens have lived and died under its rule and its predecessor, the Autonomous Region, lasted for additional centuries. For most Solomani its institutions are just the way things work rather than some authoritarian regime imposed upon them.

THE TRIUMVIRATE

Real power in the Solomani Confederation is divided between three institutions: the Solomani Party, the Solomani Confederation Armed Forces and Solomani Security. The existence of each power bloc serves the Solomani Cause but each has its own purposes and goals. Each bloc is held in check by the others, in theory preventing excesses or serious mismanagement.

The founders of the Solomani Movement believed they were creating a new order that was superior to the Imperium. They rely upon the dominant position of the Party in civil organisations to prevent fragmentation. The gloved fist of Solomani Security ensures the Party maintains its own integrity and protects the interests of Solomani society. The military is the shield of the state and serves as a unifying force by recruiting from multiple worlds, factions and social classes. In simplistic terms, the Party rules, the Armed Forces defend against physical threats, while SolSec protects against ideological threats.

THE SOLOMANI PARTY

The Solomani Party is the binding organisation under which political and government activity is conducted within the Solomani Confederation. The Party, in various forms, also exists on most worlds with a significant ethnic Solomani population within 20 parsecs of the Confederation border.

The Party originated as an interstellar coalition of planetary and multi-world political organisations. They coalesced in their opposition to changes in Imperial policy and to ensure the promotion of a distinct Solomani identity. The higher levels of the Solomani Party provided the organisation with the structure needed to present their demands to Empress Margaret and the strength to negotiate the First Charter that created the Solomani Autonomous Region. In the late 700s and early 800s, the Party took on an increasingly hierarchical structure and increased its influence in the governments of member worlds, laying the foundation for the Second Charter that established the Solomani Confederation.

Today the Solomani Party interprets the Solomani Cause and unifies the Confederation through its control of the machinery of government and the power of patronage. In particular, the Party exerts direct power over the Confederation's interstellar government through its control of the civilian ministry systems and their bureaucracies.

Membership

Solomani Party membership is automatically open to all Solomani humans. At present only Solomani humans can join the Party, although some factions continue to press for a more expansive definition of Solomani. However automatic membership does not mean automatic participation. A large fraction of Solomani, typically about 95%, choose not to participate in the Party either through apathy, disinterest or a disagreement with the basic principles of the Party or its local base.

Party members are expected to be active in attending meetings, taking and passing courses in Solomani history and philosophy and studying their genealogy. On worlds where the Party is under threat, membership could involve more militant activities such as participating in demonstrations, strikes, street fighting, revolutions or even terrorism.

Party membership is colloquially known as the 'Blue Card' for the sky-blue cards that all new members have been issued since the 824. In 1005–1040 membership cards changed to black, symbolising the loss of Terra, although in the recent years the Blue Card has been reissued. Blue Cards show the date at which a member joined the party and contain biometric and holographic data, as well as current Party rank and position, if any.

The lowest echelons of Party membership provide few benefits beyond favourable treatment by prospective employers, banks and the like. As members advance in status and rank they gain privileged access to assets owned and operated by the Party such as special shops, vacation resorts or communication networks. Starports offer private terminals for Party members and their guests. These are not free but service or quality are usually better than ordinary citizens can enjoy at the same price. Party members go to the head of the line when dealing with Solomani Confederation bureaucracies such as the various Ministries.

Local Solomani Parties

The Party can exist in different forms on different worlds. The most common is a hierarchy of committees and ruling councils, with a new level of administration at approximately every order of magnitude of members. Thus, 10 party members form a cell; 10 cells form a local committee; 10 local committees form a supervisory committee and so on up. The head of the highest-ranking committee will be at the pinnacle of each world's Party.

Depending on the percentage of inhabitants who are Party members and the exact organisation, the number of rungs in the party hierarchy to whoever is in charge at a planetary level will usually be up to three levels less than a world's Population code. For example, if one in 100 were Party members, a typical figure on most Solomani worlds with sizable populations, then a world with Population 8 (100 million or more) would have about six levels of Party hierarchy.

A planetary Party's importance within the broader Solomani Party depends on the number of members, the world's influence and the personal qualities of its leadership. The chairman of a planetary party with 200 members on a TL7 world with a population of 20,000 has far less influence than a Party chairman who represents 100 million Party members of a TL14 world with a population of 10 billion people.

THE INTERSTELLAR SOLOMANI PARTY

This term refers to the Solomani Party hierarchy above the level of individual worlds. It consists of higher-level permanent bodies and committees charged with organising Party affairs at the subsector, sector and Confederation levels. In the early years of the Solomani Confederation, this interstellar Party was unified by the goal of building strength to oppose the Imperium and gaining full control of the Solomani Sphere. After the defeat in the Solomani Rim War and its loss of Terra, confidence in it was shaken.

Although formerly of great power and influence the interstellar Party's grip is now weaker. It has become decentralised; real power in it is instead held by the Party organisations operating at the level of planetary and multi-world governments, which dominate local affairs and choose representatives to select the Secretariat and by the factions and High Council.

Nevertheless, the interstellar Party does wield significant influence when it can agree on anything. In particular, it dominates the Confederation's interstellar bureaucracy.

Congresses

The major events of the Solomani Party are the Congresses, conventions held to handle Party business, such as debating policy and anointing or electing leaders.

Planetary Congresses are held each year on Solomani worlds. Their character and importance depends on the world's government, population and Law Level. They may be held in public or secret, in isolated high security compounds, in public arenas or convention halls, in members' homes or even online networks. Some are tightly orchestrated media events with everything planned in advance; others involve spirited debate, grassroots activism or conflicts between rival factions.

If the local party is divided into ideological factions or there are rival power blocs, their struggle can range from background deal making to intimidation tactics using street demonstrations, Party militants or the faction-in-power's troops. If a convention seems to be drifting away into radical ideas that no longer seem compatible with the Solomani Cause, SolSec will take action. This could be a local SolSec political section officer politely advising the dozen people who make up their tiny colony world's political Congress to think before they act. It could also be a series of midnight arrests or covert black operations aimed at discrediting or quietly eliminating radical leaders.

The General Congress is the main event of the Solomani Party. Present-day General Congresses are enormous conventions held on Home every four years. These are intense affairs, with a million or more visiting Party Members and countless partisans or lobbyists from diverse factions. Security is tight and decorum usually maintained, at least in public, although some convention can turn into political circuses if the Party is badly split. Delegates vote on key issues based on the Party rank, size and power of their local Party but this is done in secret so that the final results give the appearance of consensus. The last few days are endless rounds of public speeches and policy papers.

The decisions made at a General Congress do not directly affect world or Confederation government but they have great influence. Which faction or politicians give the official keynote speeches to the media or whose name is on a policy paper are indications that predict the way the Secretariat will vote and the actions the High Council will pursue.

The General Congress does have the significant power to admit, suspend or expel a world's Solomani Party from its Congress. The former is used to pave the way for a new colony or other world to enter the Confederation, as it certifies that they are loyally following the Solomani Cause. The latter is a way of declaring a Party is no longer loyal to the Solomani Cause. Since the Charter of the Solomani Confederation requires that all worlds follow the Solomani Cause, it is effectively a way to excommunicate a planetary government. This is usually done prior to the Secretariat reducing the world to Protectorate status or the Secretary General calling for intervention by the Confederation military.

The Standing Committee of the General Congress of the Solomani Party consists of 100 or so senior ranking Party members based at Home supported by several thousand political staffers representing major world parties. They serve as a permanent liaison between interstellar and local parties and coordinate the Party's affairs with the operations of the High Council. They also have the power to call an Emergency Session of the General Congress if a crisis requires the Party to work out a political response. It would take about six months to assemble delegates from across the Confederation.

Solomani Party Factions

The Solomani Party was once united behind their support for the ideal of Solomani exceptionalism and an autonomous state independent from the Imperium. Having achieved this long ago, the various local and interstellar party organisations have fragmented into factions that stand for different interpretations of the Solomani Cause. Factions are most obvious during Party Congresses and in the Secretariat but also exist within the High Council, among local parties and in the bureaucracies.

Factions differ in interpretations of doctrinal issues. Among these are the pace and direction of Solomani expansion; balance of power between the Confederation as a whole and its member governments; relations with the Imperium or Aslan; tax policy; degree of support for violent Solomani militants in the Imperium; the rights of uplifted animals, mixed race Solomani and even artificial intelligences. Factions tend to go by the names of their leaders or popular nicknames such as Manifest Destiny, Dolphin Embracers or Purists. Factional strength is also regional, reflecting the local interests of planetary Solomani Party organisations and the worlds they represent.

The Solomani Interstellar Development Corps

The Solomani Party supports dozens of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) with interstellar reach that serve to promote the Solomani Cause. One example is the SIDC. This Confederation-wide organisation, founded in 1021, is dedicated to giving young Solomani citizens fresh out of school the opportunity to perform developmental and educational work among disadvantaged people, low-technology regressed worlds and aliens.

On primitive worlds and pocket empires on the Solomani frontier, SIDC missions are the face of the Solomani Party. Educational teams help spread Solomani culture and technology. Where there is trouble, SIDC relief teams distribute emergency supplies to non-Solomani worlds suffering from poverty, plague, natural disasters and war.

SIDC mission teams also work busily within the Confederation itself, especially on newly settled frontier worlds. They devote time and resources to helping primitive indigenous aliens discover their place within interstellar society. They teach them to understand Anglic, use Solomani technology and perform useful work within Solomani communities. SIDC also work within the prindig communities to help them improve their own infrastructure and approach the basic standards of Solomani Confederation society.

The SIDC missions are full of earnest, well-scrubbed Solomani youths bent on bringing civilisation and culture to pretty much everyone and they do occasionally get in over their heads. Incidents involving SIDC youth being captured, murdered or otherwise abused have resulted in intervention by Solomani Army forces, followed by an increased presence to protect Solomani citizens.

Other Party NGOs

Party Academy for Public Administration (PAPA): This is a Confederation-wide organisation of universities for training Party bureaucrats and theorists.

Solomani Athletic Committee: Dedicated to the perfection of pure Solomani athletes who excel in interstellar competition and promoting Party solidarity through sport.

Terran Veterans Association: A patriotic society open to descendants of soldiers who fought in the Battle of Terra.

STRUCTURE OF THE CONFEDERATION

The Solomani Confederation inherited the Imperial system of governance when it seceded but this has evolved over time. Rather than considering each world to be self-governing, the Confederation recognises local governments that may rule more than one star system. In some cases multiple states in the same star system or even on the same world are members but for the most part member governments have jurisdiction over at least one star system.

Each member government has representatives at the Confederation level, with a number of votes based upon the population, economic importance and technological level of the government's territory. Additional weightings are applied in some cases for worlds in strategic locations or as a reward for favourable actions. A government may have its votes devalued as punishment for disloyalty, usually on a temporary basis or until certain conditions have been met.

This system recognises the existence of alliances and multi-world states forming power blocs within the Confederation as a whole. Whilst solving some problems the system does create others, notably the wielding of power by multi-world governments. However, a one-world-one-vote system would suffer from the same issue, only due to behind the scenes influence. The Confederation system is actually more transparent, although it does not prevent bias being applied by the most powerful member governments.

Most star systems are the territory of a government located within the system or close by. Underdeveloped systems and some strategic worlds are Confederation territory, run by a governor who may be based there or at a nearby world. In the case of multiple governments in the system, each has its own sovereign territory, with either a shared jurisdiction over the rest of the system or a system governor in place to handle wider affairs on behalf of the Confederation. The standard response to any jurisdiction question is to appoint a governor, give them a small staff and let them deal with the problem.

Member governments have wide latitude in terms of laws and policies but are required to remain in alignment with overall Confederation policy. There is also a body of Confederation Law that applies everywhere and trumps local legislation if required. Typically the Confederation will just let member governments deal with matters in their own territory, which sometimes results in perpetrators not being tried for actions illegal throughout the Confederation but not prohibited in the locality they were committed. In this case the individual would normally be left alone unless the matter came to the attention of the Confederation as a whole. This would happen if the perpetrator came to the attention of the Confederation authorities or the incident was of sufficient note to attract the attention of the Ministry of Justice.

One consequence of this situation is that occasionally someone will commit a ‘Confederation-level’ crime such as multiple murders and not be prosecuted for some reason; perhaps due to influence with the local government. If the matter does not come to the attention of the Ministry of Justice the perpetrator might well get away with it. If they were to move to a different jurisdiction and information on the matter was available, an arrest might be made by the authorities in the new area despite them not having jurisdiction over the place where the crime was committed. The normal course of action would be to call in the Ministry of Justice but any member government can, in theory at least, prosecute a Confederation-level offence.

All arms and branches of the Confederation’s services and ministries have authority in the territory of member governments. There are protocols and courtesies in place but a Confederation Navy warship has rights of navigation and jurisdiction to enforce the law everywhere except designated ‘places of national security’ such as the bases of the local government’s space forces. Access to such areas can be requested but a request can be legally denied. Otherwise, ships of the Confederation Navy can go where they please.

Similar considerations apply to law enforcement agencies. Confederation-wide agencies are bound by similar rules to domestic ones about respecting the property of individuals but for routine matters there is a ‘shall grant’ clause governing operations in the territory of member governments. That is, the agency is required in most cases to request permission to operate and to give information on the nature of its operations, in the territory of a local government. The government ‘shall grant’ such permission as a matter of course. This translates to a protocol whereby local agencies cannot object if the Ministry of Justice sends a task force to take over their operations but the ministry is required to formally ask permission and explain why it is acting.

Confederation-wide agencies and services can only enforce the Confederation’s laws. They have no jurisdiction over local laws governing legal actions in the Confederation as a whole. During joint operations the high-level agencies are bound by a ‘may grant’ rule, which states that local agencies can request assistance in making arrests or handling prosecutions for local crimes and the high-level agency ‘shall grant’ such a request, if deemed appropriate.

This approach applies to most interactions between the Confederation and its member governments. Duties to the Confederation are typically absolute, whilst the Confederation as a whole may or may not assist a member government depending on circumstances. In practice, the obligations in both directions are well established and even if the Confederation does not have to take a requested action, custom often dictates that it should.

This is perhaps the most important facet of Confederation governance; those who govern must be worthy of the trust placed in them. Indeed, the Confederation came into being because the Imperial government no longer served the best interests of the Solomani people. To repeat that failure would be a betrayal of the principles upon which the Confederation is founded.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local governments are guaranteed almost complete autonomy, although they must remain within certain limits set by the Charter of Confederation. This requires them to support the Solomani Cause, pay taxes and respect the sovereignty of Confederation levels of government over interstellar matters. The Charter of the Solomani Confederation requires world governments be approved by the Party and espouse the Solomani Cause but the government itself will usually be separate from the Party system.

Local governments in the Confederation can exist in a variety of forms, from corporate states to religious dictatorships, as long as all recognise the primacy of the Solomani Party. On worlds in which the entire population are Solomani, every adult may be a Party member and the world is therefore a fully participatory democracy. On other worlds, the Party could be an oligarchy that controls politics through doling out patronage, a bureaucracy whose senior service posts are controlled by Party leaders or even a theocracy whose religion incorporates the ‘holy’ Solomani Cause into its dogma.

On worlds where Party influence is strong, positions in the Party hierarchy correspond directly to parallel positions in government. On such a world the planetary president or dictator may be leader of the Party; the chairman of every city’s Solomani Party is also its mayor and the Solomani Party educational committee runs the local school and picks its teachers. In a nominal representative democracy, for example, the Party’s influence may be more subtle, perhaps existing as network of patronage and privilege that vets all candidates for office and controls the civil service and big-money political donors. All candidates stand for the Solomani Cause; elections would turn on their support of other issues or their personal character.

CONFEDERATION GOVERNMENT

The interstellar governing body of the Solomani Confederation is the Secretariat, named after the government of the Terran Confederation and before that, the executive body of the United Nations. It consists of delegates who represent the member governments of the Confederation. There are currently 765 seated delegates, one representing each member government within the Confederation. This number can change every decade with redistricting based on census results and economic performance.

Delegates to the Secretariat are given one or more votes, depending on a formula based on their world's government's contribution to the Confederation as a whole. Economic output, technological level and population size are the main factors but the final value is heavily influenced by strategic considerations and, in some cases, historical events. Some member governments have extra votes to commemorate a great sacrifice or victory. These are cast with great ceremony after the general vote, allowing a government to commemorate its heroic actions or contribution to the Solomani Cause every time a matter is voted on. Occasionally a delegate will cast the general vote but withhold the additional ones, usually as an indication of protest or reservations about a course of action. It is customary in such situations to declare that 'we see the necessity of this measure but our heroes and our forefathers do not approve'.

Low population, low-technology and economically insignificant worlds often fail to meet the threshold to merit a delegate. In many cases these worlds are not represented, although where several are located in the same region they may be collectively assigned a delegate. Some entire subsectors on the rimward border are represented in this manner.

The choice of who will serve as a delegate is left up to the member government. It could be the head of that government or someone they appoint to the position. The Solomani Parties of each world generally control that world's government, so the membership of each world's Party also determines who will represent it. Where there is a multi-world district or a balkanised world, that district or world's member governments vote to choose who the delegate will be. The number of votes each can cast in this election is determined by their relative economic contribution.

Powers of the Secretariat

The Secretariat exists to debate and vote on resolutions affecting the Confederation as a whole. Resolutions cover treaties, amendments to the fundamental law supporting the Charter, confirmation of senior officials, taxation levels and allocation of budgets between the various government ministries. Measures are usually carried by majority vote. The secretariat can also create committees to investigate issues of Confederation-wide importance and summon witnesses to testify before it. It can also vote to summon a member of the High Council to give testimony regarding their ministry or service they control.

The Secretariat's most important responsibility is to vote to elect or confirm in office the Secretary General of the Solomani Confederation. The Confederation Charter is required to elect or confirm every four years, with elections usually held about a month after the Solomani Party's general congress. The Secretariat can also remove a Secretary General or demand the resignation of a member of the High Council but this is difficult, requiring a 75% vote of no confidence.

The High Council uses most of the budget to fund various agencies but typically some 5–15% is left for discretionary funding. This gives the Secretariat the ability to fund projects of 'interstellar interest' that will 'further the Solomani Cause' such as building starports named after local Solomani politicians or war heroes.

The Secretariat has limited powers over the internal affairs of worlds but via two-thirds majority can declare a member government illegitimate should it 'no longer support the ideals of the Solomani Cause' and expel it. This is normally only done punitively if the Solomani Party's General Congress has revoked the credential of that world's Party, although it would also be done if a world rebelled against the Confederation.

The Secretariat has various standing committees to discuss specific areas of policy in private chambers. They have no power but significant influence with the ministries. Indeed, influence is often more important than power. The internal politics of the Confederation can be complex, with many cross-cutting agendas. It is not always clear who controls the people who wield the power or if they are sufficiently free of external influences to be able to make their own decisions.

Secretary General

The Secretariat is presided over by the Secretary General, who is elected by its membership. The Secretary General is the chief source of executive power in the Solomani Confederation government and commander in chief of the military. He is usually also chairman of the High Council. His Office of the Secretary General has discretionary power over 20% of the Confederation budget.

A candidate for Secretary General must be a current or former member of the Solomani supreme executive, the High Council. He must be nominated by any two delegates of the Secretariat. This is a formality, although a good nomination speech will occasionally sway wavering delegates. If there is more than one candidate, voting proceeds in multiple rounds, with the weakest candidates being eliminated until the new Secretary General is elected by a majority.

The elected Secretary General has traditionally been the most influential member of the High Council or a consensus choice of different factions. Often, the High Council will come up with a candidate that they can all support, then influence the Secretariat to select that individual, although sometimes a popular choice will be rammed through instead.

The High Council and the Ministries

Executive power in the Solomani government is exercised through the High Council, a supreme policy-making body ordinarily chaired by the Secretary General. The High Council decides how to spend the budgets voted to the various ministries. It meets to coordinate ministerial policy.

The High Council normally follows the direction of the Secretary General and reaches decisions by consensus but may vote where this is impossible. If a minister or the Secretary General loses a vote they must either resign or switch their vote to follow the majority. Traditionally, the Secretary General casts their votes last and thus can always see where the wind is blowing.

The High Council has existed in various forms since the founding of the Confederation. The current streamlined organisation was established just after the Solomani Rim War. It has 11 seats and its debates are held in closed chambers. The Secretary General traditionally holds two seats, Chairman and Secretary General, giving him two votes. However, this is not required and occasionally the Chairman is a different individual. Before the Solomani Rim War the chairman was often the head of Terra's Solomani Party.

In theory anyone with requisite experience can be appointed to the High Council. In practice the nominations for Ministries invariably go to those high-ranking members of the Solomani Party hierarchy who hold Party positions associated with these bureaucracies.

The power of the High Council rests in the fact that its membership holds all ministerial positions within the Confederation Government and thus appoints and controls the bureaucracy. In addition, some High Council members also hold powerful positions as leaders or representatives of particular member governments. For example, Ryoko Skinner was Solomani Party sector supervisor for Alpha Crucis. She was also on the board of directors of Macrogenesis, a Solomani Party-owned genetic engineering corporation. This positioned her at the upper levels of Party power and she was a prominent speaker on various bio-tech related committees at the last General Congress. With her nomination to the High Council, she filled the vacant spot as Minister for Genetics.

The High Council meets once a month and the standing committee meets weekly. The agenda for the meetings is controlled by the Secretary General. New members of the High Council must be nominated by the Secretary General and be confirmed by High Council vote. However, High Council members do not serve at the pleasure of the Secretary General; the Secretary General cannot ask a member to resign and they will continue to serve after the term ends. Thus, High Council members serve indefinitely unless they are dismissed by the Secretariat, die in office or opt to retire. This makes them a self-perpetuating oligarchy that is occasionally subject to replacement.

Since much real power exists within the High Council, elections for General Secretary have far greater significance during periods when a High Council member's seat is either vacant or one or more members seem likely to retire or die in office.

In 1105 the High Council had the following seats:

- Chairman of the High Council and Secretary General – Osmond Salazar
- Grand Admiral of the Solomani Confederation Navy – Elijah Drummond
- General of the Solomani Confederation Army – Ivy Bergman
- Minister of Economics – Regina Rogachova
- Minister of Information – Feng Banerjee
- Minister of Foreign and Colonial Affairs – Heidi Lopez
- Minister of Genetics – Ryoko Skinner
- Minister of Justice – Khalid O'Sullivan
- Minister of Science and Technology – Jordan Azazi
- SolSec Coordinator – Juliet Chen

The Ministries

The Ministries are powerful administrative organisations, the Confederation's equivalent of the Imperial bureaucracy. The ministries exist to fulfil functions mandated in the Confederation Charter, such as maintaining a treasury, regulating interstellar commerce or promoting the Solomani Cause.

Ministry of the Economy: This manages the Solomani Treasury and runs the Solomani Bank. It sets monetary policy, interest rates and exchange rates between member worlds and against other economies. It writes regulations that affect interstellar commerce and starship operation. Its analysts determine the economic performance of Confederation worlds and develop the formula that determines what taxes they pay and how many votes their delegates receive in the Secretariat.

Ministry of Foreign and Colonial Affairs: This ministry manages relations with foreign governments through the professional Solomani Diplomatic Corps and its staff of foreign embassies and numerous translators, foreign trade specialists, linguists and xenologists. Its small Office of Diplomatic Intelligence uses agents to gather information on foreign governments without it being filtered through SolSec. Also under Foreign Affairs is the Colonial Office that provides businesses and would-be settlers with assistance in establishing or emigrating to new Solomani colonies and manages their smooth transition from protectorates into Solomani member states. Its Prindig Bureau looks after the affairs of primitive indigenous races and assists their integration into the Confederation.

Ministry of Genetics: The fundamental importance of race in the Solomani Cause explains the existence of this ministry. The ministry's primary role is to make genetic testing available throughout the Confederation. Specialists in the Ministry's High Dolphin Bureau helps manage Confederation relations with uplifted Dolphins and the small number of other uplifted cetaceans. The Uplifted Animal Office does the same, with somewhat less sensitivity, for uplifted Apes, enhanced dogs and similar cases. The Ecological Oversight Office is also in charge of regulating large-scale ecological engineering projects such as seeding worlds with terrestrial life forms, although this is normally done in cooperation with planetary governments and corporate interests.

Ministry of Justice: This ministry administers the Solomani high court system that handles interstellar lawsuits and crimes, negotiates extradition between worlds and operates the court system in Confederation protectorates such as frontier colonies. The Solomani Ministry of Justice was derived from its Imperial counterpart and operates in a broadly similar fashion. It has no mandate to deal with issues involving political crimes or the military; that jurisdiction is left to SolSec. The staff is composed of Solomani Party personnel recruited from backgrounds in local law-making and law enforcement.

Ministry of Justice marshals provide close protection bodyguards for the interstellar leadership of the government, Solomani Party and for SolSec offices and personnel. They also investigate interstellar terrorist threats to the Solomani Confederation, often in coordination with SolSec or planetary police. They coordinate with the navy and local law enforcement bodies to handle interstellar crimes such as human trafficking, arms smuggling or piracy. Their elite Special Police protect important Confederation government facilities and administer the Confederation's prison planets.

Ministry of Information: This administers tax credits and grants that promote information and educational initiatives deemed important to the Confederation, whether that is graduating more students with advanced degrees in jumpspace physics or ensuring school children take classes in Solomani History and Philosophy. It engages in a wide range of activities such as promoting Confederation tourism, countering anti-Solomani propaganda, funding worthy pro-Solomani cultural events and even running the Office of Solomani Languages, which works to support endangered archaic Terran languages while ensuring that Anglic be purged of improper influences such as Vilani loan-words.

Ministry of Science and Technology: This ministry deals with issues such as interstellar patent protection but it also provides Confederation funding to scientific research and experimental projects. The ministry tends to prefer spending on 'big science' prestige projects that vividly demonstrate Solomani prowess. These include programmes such as fast planetary terraforming, launching long range interstellar exploration missions into the next galactic arm, creating a planet-encircling particle accelerator for high-energy physics research or building the biggest meson gun ever made. The Ministry runs multiple state-funded research stations usually in partnership with academia or private enterprise.

Confederation Public Holidays

Solomani Party and Confederation government offices close on these holidays, with the exception of essential services like SolSec, as do most world government agencies and many private businesses. Secretariat funds are liberally used to ensure holidays are memorable events that emphasise the Solomani Cause and Solomani heritage.

New Year's Day (Jan 1): An official holiday celebrating the start of the Terran year.

Liberation Day (Jan 21): Celebrates the date of the founding of the Solomani Confederation. The Secretary General gives a speech on the State of the Confederation.

Leap Day (Feb 29): Commemorates the Terran invention of the jump drive and celebrates scientific achievements by people of Solomani origin. The prestigious Ministerial Prize for Scientific Excellence is awarded at Home. Leap Day is celebrated every four years.

Public Vigilance Day (March 15): SolSec officers speak at schools to emphasise the responsibility of the citizenry to remain alert to threats, the social problems caused by spreading rumours and false information and the importance of the monitor programme.

Festival of Earth (April 4): Celebrates the biodiversity of Terran life. It is popular with local merchants. Cities are decorated with imported or simulated Terran floral displays. There may be performances by uplifted Dolphins and parades led by uplifted Apes and other Terran animals or people dressed like them. On some worlds it is 'the Festival of Flowers' and is a major romantic holiday and favourite time to propose marriage.

Navy Day (June 5): Honours the Confederation Navy, the Navy Home Forces and the Marines. Fleet reviews and mock battles are held in the skies of major worlds, with an especially impressive performance at Home. The Confederation Navy is tasked with making one or more warships available for public visits at every major starport in the Confederation and Navy personnel may participate in parades in major cities.

Ivan Wolfe's Birthday (August 20): Local holiday on Home and some other worlds.

Solomani Day (first Monday in September): A day for celebrating pride in the Solomani race and the Solomani Cause. It is now mainly a family vacation date, although various Party events are often scheduled for the faithful. Honours the creation of the Solomani Party at the first all-Party Congress on Terra. On worlds with mixed populations, Party militants will sometimes march on parades through mixed-race or non-Solomani neighbourhoods.

Terran Heritage Week (last week in October): A celebration of ethnic pride in all things Terran, with parades of people dressing in ethnic costumes and eating traditional Terran food. At the end of the week, Solomani children dress in traditional Terran costumes and go door-to-door distributing Party buttons or flags and receiving treats in return.

Remembrance Day (November 9): The day Terra surrendered to the Imperium. It honours the sacrifice of Solomani Rim War veterans, especially the Army and remembers the continued oppression of Solomani people in the occupied systems. Flags are flown at half-mast and Party and government officials promise the occupied systems will eventually be freed.

Bellerophon (last week in December): A week of giving presents to friends, children and the less fortunate, and for being grateful for one's own accomplishments. Honours a Terran Mercantile Consortium starship of the same name whose possibly apocryphal voyage distributed Terran goods, including toys, to isolated colony worlds during the Long Night. It is also a time of Solomani Party charity drives. Since the Solomani Rim War, it has often been preceded with a week of fasting to symbolise the rationing worlds experienced during the War. This honours the civilian Merchant Marine and free traders who risked ships and lives to bring supplies to isolated systems despite Imperial commerce raiders. Those in port get free drinks at startowns across the Confederation.

Religions and world governments also celebrate additional own holidays, which often overlap or coincide with those celebrated Confederation-wide.

Multi-World Alliances

The polities that joined the Confederation included several multi-world alliances, a few of them dating back to pre-Imperial times, as well as scattered human pocket empires on the rimward and trailing frontier. Some of these states agreed or were induced to join the Confederation as individual worlds but even these continue to maintain some of their old relationships, often formalised through reciprocal free trade pacts or mutual assistance treaties between their respective governments and Home Forces.

Formal or informal multi-world alliances wield significant economic and political power in some subsectors. Along with the various ideological Party factions they also control blocs of votes in the Secretariat. Inevitably this influence is used to gain advantage over economic rivals or to push for policies that benefit the faction to the detriment of others. Centrist elements in the Confederation fear these alliances could end up splintering the Confederation if they use force to threaten non-aligned neighbours. SolSec keeps a close eye on such internal associations, balancing the risks that intervention could destabilise important worlds with the danger that regional rivalries and trade wars could escalate into a conflict that threatens the internal peace and cohesion of the Confederation itself. Instability on or near the Imperial or Aslan borders could also attract foreign intervention.

For example, the Near Boötes League in the Solomani Rim consists of wealthy neighbouring star systems whose political, economic and cultural ties predate the founding of the Confederation. The interest the Boötes cluster worlds have in cross-border trade with the Imperium has helped foster a post-war spirit of détente. However, relations have not always been good within the league. Internal disputes resulted in the Boötes Trade War, which pitted the powerful worlds of the region against one another and disrupted the economy of the surrounding region. Conditions have not entirely returned to normal.

Interstellar Politics Within the Confederation

The Confederation is far more factionalised than the Imperium. Control over matters of interstellar interest such as foreign policy, trade, and the employment of military power flow from the bottom up. Every member government has its own say in these matters, based on the number of votes it can bring to the Secretariat. These governments, controlled by their local Parties, vote in their own economic and political interests, often in coalition with other allied worlds or representatives from similar factions.

This bottom-up approach to politics is radically different from that of the Imperium, where authority on matters of interstellar concern flows from the top down, from the emperor to the nobility and where there is a clear division between the rules of planets and those of space. The importance of member governments in determining policy is what enables Confederation citizens to boast that their own institutions offer greater freedom than those of the Imperium. Anyone who has witnessed the sometimes raucous meetings of all 700+ delegates of the Secretariat can attest to the vibrancy of Solomani interstellar politics.

Numerous informal caucuses and alliances exist within the Secretariat, representing groupings of member governments, the interests of the Ministries and the military and the dozens of philosophical factions of the Solomani Party itself. The stabilising factor that keeps the entire system from falling into disarray is the Solomani Party. The tools it employs are the Solomani Armed Forces and Solomani Security.

CHAPTER-SIX

CONFEDERATION ARMED FORCES

The Solomani Confederation maintains military forces as instruments of policy, to defend against attacks by its neighbours and to ensure internal stability. Unlike those of the Imperium, Confederation central military forces are also used in a peace-enforcement role and their commanders have a direct seat in political decision-making as voting members of its High Council.

The forces deployable by the Confederation consist of three major groupings. The Confederation Armed Forces, subdivided into the Confederation Navy and the Confederation Army, are raised and commanded by the Confederation as a whole. Home Forces are raised and supported by member governments. Attached Forces is a catch-all term covering all other military and supporting formations, of whatever source. There is a considerable amount of mobility between these three groupings, usually on a temporary basis.

It is common for Confederation Military forces to operate in conjunction with Attached Forces. For example, a merchant shipping line might provide vessels to a Confederation task force as additional supply assets. These would be considered ‘attached forces’ rather than being a formal part of the task force. Likewise, mercenaries operating in conjunction with Confederation Army units would be Attached Forces – only units raised, trained, equipped and commanded by the Confederation as a whole are considered to be part of the Confederation Military. This distinction is sometimes useful in avoiding responsibility for a fiasco but more commonly it is an administrative function; Confederation forces will always meet certain standards, Attached forces may or may not.

In some cases elements of the Confederation Armed Forces may be placed under the hand of a local Home Forces commander. Such units can be returned to Confederation command at any time but in the meantime they are inserted into the local chain of command and considered to be part of the Home Forces. The reverse is not true; when Home Forces units are assigned to Confederation command they are considered to be Attached Forces for the duration of the assignment unless they meet certain specific criteria and are formally seconded to the Confederation military.

POLITICAL OFFICERS AND MONITORS

All formations of the Confederation Armed Forces include political personnel. These include covert monitors, SolSec agents inserted into the service’s training programme. Some follow a highly successful career – warship captains and even admirals have declared upon retirement that they were in fact covert monitors – but most serve at a junior level for a few years before transferring to an overt role. In some cases this means activation to prevent a mutiny or remove a politically suspect crewmember. More commonly the operative serves quietly for a few years then moves on to a more open role.

Those personnel who are openly SolSec monitors remain in their parent career and are treated exactly like any other member of that service, except for one detail – they wear a different hat. Instead of the black navy cap or the green army one, a monitor wears a mid-grey cap with normal uniform for their service. Some monitors are bullies or using the role to further their career ambitions but most are earnest guardians of the service’s loyalty.

The difference between a covert and an open monitor is significant; covert monitors by definition conceal their allegiance and pretend to be ordinary members of the service. Open monitors are not SolSec operatives; they are members of their parent service who report to SolSec and provide additional functions. A monitor is expected to have a good grasp of political reality and can advise comrades or superiors on moral dilemmas or the likely implications of a course of action. It is possible to become a monitor by taking a short Political Awareness Course during training, with advanced education available later in the monitor’s career. A monitor will – in theory at least – follow a normal career path for their service and might even rise to command a military unit or warship.

Small units such as corvettes and infantry companies have no Political Officer assigned. Their commanders must rely on their monitors for political advice – which can mean a 19-year-old who has just completed a six-week course is suddenly asked about the political implications of a given action. Commanders of such vessels and units are under no obligation to consult their monitors about any decision, although they know their actions will be reported upon. Those who command larger formations and ships will be assigned a Political Officer.

Political Officers serve as the 'second captain' of a warship or the 'second commander' of an army unit. Their role is to prevent the commanding officer from taking 'unwise' decisions that might harm the Confederation as a whole. The Political Officer is subordinate to the commanding officer in the chain of command but has the right to veto any order. This can create an awkward situation but when it works, the system is highly effective. The captain of a warship focuses on strategic decisions and commanding their ship, whilst the Political Officer offers advice on wider implications of any action.

Political Officers occupy an odd status in the Confederation's military. They are part of the naval or military chain of command but are part of SolSec. The only way to become a Political Officer is to follow a successful career in the service then transfer to SolSec. This is termed 'going sideways' and is often accompanied by a promotion. This provides a route for advancement to naval or army officers whose careers have stalled and is often used by those who are not competent in their current role.

SolSec is careful about who it accepts but those who slip through the cracks contribute to a bad reputation for Political Officers in general. Overall, Political Officers are usually former covert or open monitors, or successful officers who genuinely want to take on a different role. Some are ambitious and wanted the extra promotion, which does not necessarily make them bad Political Officers.

Service as a Political Officer is a good route into the higher echelons of SolSec but it cannot lead to command of a warship or military unit. The armed services are willing to accept political oversight and the loss of some of their personnel to SolSec but they are not willing to place their ships and battalions under the command of a different service. This means that an overt monitor cannot ever attain starship command and once a covert monitor is revealed they must transfer to SolSec. Being a monitor does sometimes result in quicker promotion at the low and mid-levels but it is a choice that leads to SolSec, not high naval or military rank.

SERVICE UNIFORMS

The formal uniforms of the army, navy, marines – and also SolSec – are quite similar in general cut and style. The basic concept is a tunic and trousers, although with variations for different army regiments. 'Highland' regiments of the army may wear a kilt rather than trousers, although in this context 'Highland' is more a matter of regimental tradition than origins in any particular terrain. Similarly, some army formations are designated as 'rifle' rather than 'infantry' units. This indicates a tradition of sharpshooting and marksmanship. These units, along with armoured formations, wear a heavily frogged dolman jacket rather than the plainer tunic of the infantry. All units have a splendid amount of braid, of course.

The army wears green, as is traditional, whilst Marine formal uniform is a close variant of the Army version but in dark blue. Naval personnel wear black with a department-coloured stripe down the trouser seam. Naval tunics are a little longer than ground personnel wear but of a similar design. Whereas army uniform has a variety of significant differences based on unit type, Confederation Naval uniform has only slight differences between the commands. To an experienced observer, it is easy to distinguish someone serving with Fleet Operations Command from a colleague in Survey and Exploration Command. An outsider might not be able to see a difference.

In general, Home Forces follow Confederation practice with small variations but some may use a completely different mode of dress. SolSec formal uniforms are dark grey, cut like the army uniform for most personnel but with a 'space service' tunic for those serving in a primarily spaceborne role. All services wear the same hat, a typical peaked cap. It is in the branch colour to match the uniform, with one exception. Overt SolSec monitors and Political Officers attached to military units wear the uniform of their unit – navy, army or marines – with a grey cap.

THE CONFEDERATION NAVY

The navy is the senior service of the Solomani Confederation. Its mission is to use interstellar warships to project military power in the service of the Solomani Cause. The navy defends Solomani citizens, territory and trade. It deters threats to the Solomani Confederation's peace and prosperity. It is also ordered to prepare to be ready to take the offensive in a new war against the Imperium should its political masters ever determine that a credible strategic opportunity exists to break the armistice and liberate Terra.

The Confederation Navy is, to some extent, the prodigal son of the Imperial Navy. It inherited its first ships, commanders and traditions from Imperial formations transferred to the Solomani Autonomous District. Some of its first flag officers had served in the Imperial Navy before the formation of the Confederation. A few hundred years have led to differences in approach but both navies share many common traditions, ranks and practices.

Perhaps the major distinction is that the Solomani Navy also performs scouting, message transmission and survey functions that in the Imperium are the preserve of the Scout Service. Dedicated courier vessels are used for official communications and will often carry civilian messages as well. Naval survey ships maintain up-to-date maps of star systems within and a little beyond the Confederation's borders. Exploration is undertaken by specialist vessels, many of which are obsolete warships that have been adapted and refitted.

Confederation Navy officers are aware that at times in their career they may be explorers or diplomats as well as warriors. To this end, the navy will train some of its officers in scientific fields such as xenology or planetology. Not only does this allow it to better perform exploration functions but these specialists will also provide militarily useful information. Naval xenologists can explain how an alien enemy thinks, planetologists can help locate and target buried fortifications, and so on

The navy has jurisdiction over not only its own courier network but also over civilian and corporate assets carrying information between worlds. Communications into or out of a given system can be suspended at the command of a senior naval officer. Typically the navy wields this message interdiction capability as means of concealing fleet movements from foreign agents or, at the direction of the Secretary General, punishing misbehaving worlds. Interrupting a system or alliance's courier service can cause great financial harm without the need for overt intervention or physical blockade and can deny information to potential rebels. SolSec envies the navy's direct control of the courier system; negotiations between the two organisations can sometimes hinge on the navy's willingness to give SolSec access. SolSec does not always need to ask; it tries to have trusted open and sleeper agents at key facilities.

Unlike the Imperial Navy, the Confederation Navy does not maintain sector and subsector fleets. In peacetime its forces are deployed to regional commands, which are typically larger than a subsector but smaller than a sector, and strategic reserves. Deployments are based on astrographical reality rather than neat subsector boundaries. Some regional commands are very small, typically where an astrographical choke point or traditional trouble spot requires close focus. However, where a strategic system requires heavy defence, for example somewhere close to the Imperial border, it is more common to award the local Home Forces a subsidy to provide heavy defence and assign some fleet elements to reinforce the area when needed.

In wartime, combat fleets are formed from the regional forces and strategic reserve, and are supported by the regional bases. Where possible the assets assigned to a force are tailored to the needs of its expected operational area but in practice less important regions get whatever is left over when the primary deployments are completed.

Within the Confederation Navy there are many subdivisions, most of which exist at both the strategic and local level. Personnel and vessels can, for the most part, move from one command group to another although certain vessel types are almost never associated with some of these missions.

Fleet Operations Command (FOC)

Fleet Operations Command is by far the largest and most important of the command groups. Often just referred to as 'fleet' or 'fleet ops', Fleet Operations Command is responsible for the activities of the 'fighting navy' and its immediate supports. It controls almost all the capital ships and cruisers of the Confederation Navy along with the best examples of all the other vessel types. Fleet Ops is mostly concerned with large-scale operations such as defence of the Confederation from invasion but will sometimes detach assets to deal with a local problem.

Internal Security Command (ISC)

Internal Security Command is responsible for patrol operations and protection of commerce as well as providing any assistance the member governments may need. It primarily operates multirole vessels or patrol ships of relatively low capability, optimised for long deployments. ISC does have a few older capital ships and cruisers at its disposal, which are often posted as guardships at critical points.

Support Operations Command (SOC)

Support Operations Command is the supply and logistics arm of the Confederation Navy and also provides a number of other functions. Many of its assets are tankers, transports and supply ships, with a modest number of escort vessels of up to cruiser size. SOC also operates the flotillas of couriers that keep official information flowing between the member worlds of the Confederation.

Survey and Exploration Command (SEC)

Survey and Exploration Command is responsible for internal chart updates and long-range exploration. Many of its specialist personnel come from the Associate and Consultancy Programme, which provides basic naval training to civilian personnel who may serve aboard an exploration ship. SEC is typically equipped with either refitted obsolete warships or specialist exploration vessels.

Base and Reserve Command (BRC)

Base and Reserve Command operates and supports bases throughout the Confederation. Most bases have their own small force of transports and supply ships as well as a security element that is typically made up of non-jump-capable craft. BRC also administers the navy's reserve forces. Much of these are made up of reservists who have retired in recent years or receive assistance with funding for education in return for a period in the naval reserves but there are also active ships and personnel. Typically these are on secondment to other forces or organisations – member governments, client states or Home Forces – but can be recalled at need.

Administration and Training Command (ATC)

Administration and Training Command is responsible for procurement, planning and recruitment throughout the Confederation. Its remit also covers strategic planning and naval intelligence, which is a semi-autonomous body embedded within ATC. When necessary, naval intelligence personnel blend into the mass of staff officers, administrators and odd-job-handlers needed to keep the Confederation Navy running. ATC also keeps track of movements between the fleet and the Home Forces, and of Attached Forces assigned to the fleet. It is an open secret that many of its liaison personnel are actually naval intelligence operatives.

NAVAL DOCTRINE AND DEPLOYMENTS

As with the structure of the Confederation Navy, its doctrine has diverged from that of the Imperium in the years since secession. Design philosophy and tactics are geared towards enabling the fleet to perform feats of arms rather than grinding an enemy down in a war of attrition. Thus primary fleet assets are designed to move fast and hit hard but many are relatively lightly protected. The Confederation cannot hope to defeat the Imperium in a slugging match but if the fleet can do enough damage – and threaten to do more – the Imperials may be forced to negotiate a treaty before their superior weight of metal can make itself felt.

This strategy came close to working during the Solomani Rim War and has been refined since. In an all-out war with the Imperium, heavy strike forces will advance boldly and strike at targets of strategic and political importance. Lighter raiding forces will spread out along the lines of advance and cause maximum destruction. As the enemy responds, the primary forces will concentrate against each formation in turn whilst hampering enemy mobility by striking at support elements.

An enemy advance will be handled much the same way. Mobile reinforcements will assist Home Forces in blunting the advance whilst the Imperial supply line is harassed by fleet elements. Again, the emphasis will be on offensive action – in this case defending the Confederation by striking into the Imperium. This strategy revolves around the superior resilience of the Solomani people, who will resist Imperial attacks vigorously and make occupation hell for the Imperials if they are overrun. Tough, proud Solomani citizens will endure being cut off for a time where Imperials in the same position will collapse.

Thus any future major conflict is expected to be a battle of wills, which the Solomani Confederation is absolutely convinced it can win. Previous conflicts have strengthened the belief that the Imperials have little stomach for a protracted fight. Their people will be clamouring for peace as soon as the first casualty reports come in, whereas the Solomani will proudly pay the price for victory. Hopeful as this thinking may seem, in fact it is the only viable strategy: fight hard, grab what you can and bleed the enemy for every gain they make, then win the war at the negotiating table.

Ship design is tailored to support this strategy. In addition to powerful battleships, the Confederation Navy has a large battlecruiser force. Operating in conjunction with a force of strike destroyers, a battlecruiser can inflict heavy damage on enemy infrastructure and overwhelm anything but a capital ship. Against those, the key is rapid concentration of force so the enemy is smothered with fire before being able to do much harm. There is also a rather cynical observation to be made, that the same amount of damage will force a battlecruiser out of action – albeit for a longer period of repairs – as a battleship. Since the Confederation naval budget is much smaller than that of the Imperium, the emphasis is on delivering enough damage to force the withdrawal of an enemy unit, doing so as cheaply as possible.

This philosophy is echoed throughout the fleet. Strike destroyers armed with torpedoes or fusion guns are favoured over more balanced designs. These vessels either operate as flotillas of similar ships or in support of one or more battlecruisers, and it is these battlecruiser/destroyer forces that form the backbone of the Confederation's striking and rapid-reaction forces. Fleet cruisers are often equipped for the escort and support role, equipped with a mix of light beam weapons and missiles.

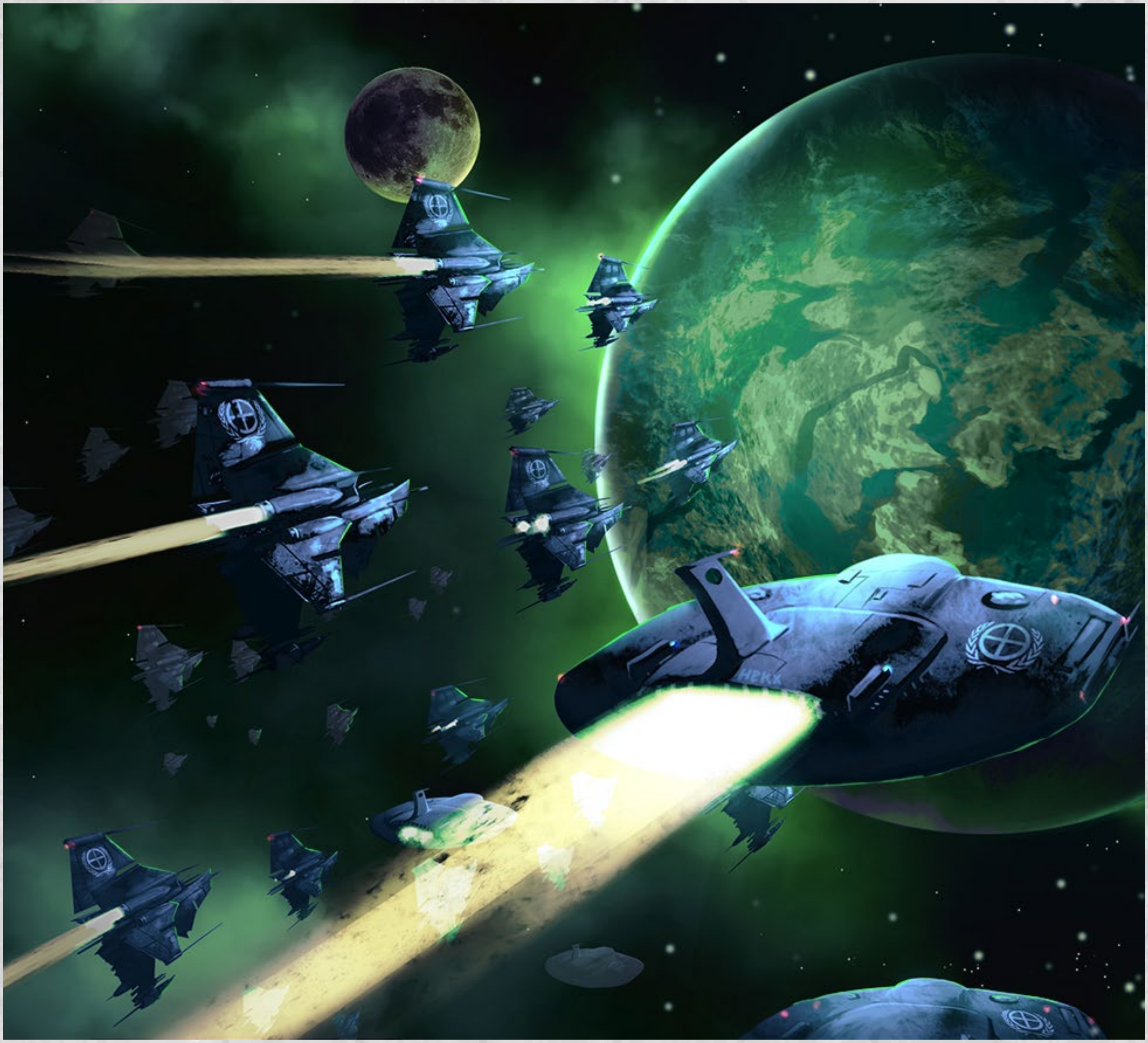
The fleet also operates a surprisingly large number of battle riders; far more than it has tenders for. This allows a standard design to be deployed as a 'battle monitor' to defend key points and for reinforcements to be delivered to any system that needs them. Tenders are considered to be transport vessels rather than the tender/rider grouping being a warfighting asset. That is to say these are defensive assets even when mobile, used to consolidate behind an advance or to reinforce threatened systems. Riders are rarely deployed offensively.

Cruisers tend to be specialist vessels intended to support others rather than independent assets in their own right. Strike and bombardment cruisers are deployed for planetary attack, along with assault ships designed to deliver marine forces and troop transports for the army. Carriers are also used in this role, typically deploying fighters capable of entering atmosphere in support of ground combat forces.

The patrol forces typically make do with frigates and those escort vessels not in use by the 'warfighting' formations. Some cruisers are also available but the cruiser budget has always been subordinate to the needs of the capital ship and destroyer forces. In Solomani parlance, the distinction between heavy and light cruisers is in regard to armament rather than size or overall capability. A heavy cruiser has a spinal mount of some kind; a light cruiser does not. A recent revival is the 'system control ship' concept; a cruiser-sized vessel combining the capabilities of a cruiser and a small carrier. Intended for patrol and peace-enforcement work these designs have been found useful in the escort role, with a proportion of new-built vessels redirected from the patrol forces to fleet and support deployments. In the meantime the patrol forces soldier on with what they can get.

Naval forces are administratively grouped as fleets and flotillas. These are designated according to their area of operations, which is rarely a neat astrographic region such as a sector or subsector. For smaller operations, task forces are formed under the command of a commodore or rear-admiral, whilst for larger deployments the force may be a group of task forces or formally organised squadrons. By long-standing tradition a squadron consists of ships of the same type, a flotilla consists of smaller vessels capable of fulfilling the same role and a task force (or just 'force') is made up of a mix of ships.

It is common to move forces between commands on a frequent basis. Ships will stay in the same general area for the most part but move to a different command structure from time-to-time. This helps confuse potential enemies about the composition of forces and ensures that a vessel transfer is not a clear indicator that something is about to happen. This practice is most common and most frequent near the borders, whereas internal patrol and specialist formations tend to retain the same composition for years.



EXPLORATION AND SURVEY

The Solomani Confederation does not have a dedicated exploration and communications service. Instead these functions are carried out by the navy or private concerns, either independently or on contract to the Confederation government. It is not uncommon for naval officers to spend at least a part of their career aboard a survey or short-range exploration ship and for older naval vessels to be repurposed for exploration or survey work.

Naval personnel are first and foremost warfighters, so in order to obtain the necessary scientific and specialist expertise the navy runs an associate and consultancy programme. This is open to former naval personnel or those interested in serving aboard a naval exploration ship. In the latter case the associate must complete a truncated naval training course enabling them to carry out basic functions aboard a starship without getting in the way of other crewmembers. The course also enables the navy to filter out potential troublemakers. No matter how brilliant a scientist may be, they cannot be permitted to challenge the authority of a ship's officers.

Those who have already completed a period of naval service are typically reinstated at their old rank. This is common in the case of personnel who have served a single term in order to qualify for education benefits. In this case, the return to service carried an exploration-only clause, whereby the returnee is guaranteed a place aboard an exploration or survey vessel, or at a base supporting them. Exploration-only personnel can be transferred to fighting vessels in the case of a major emergency but the Confederation Navy generally treats its members honourably. Those who enter into an agreement to come back on specific terms will usually find they are honoured. Those who do not want to join or return to the navy become civilian consultants. They have no place on a ship's chain of command but may be important to its overall mission and will be consulted by the exploration ship's officers when appropriate.

As discussed elsewhere, the navy provides a rapid communications network between the bases and major worlds of the Confederation. This is administered by the Support Operations Command branch of the navy Whilst capable of interstellar flight, naval couriers are not considered to be starships as such. They are instead communications assets under the control of a base or parent ship. Commanding officers tend to be lieutenants gaining experience in a limited-responsibility posting before moving on to a more senior post aboard a larger ship. A period as commanding officer of a courier is not counted as holding 'a command' in the usual sense, since the vessel remains subordinate to the local communications group or a parent installation, but it is a stepping-stone to greater things. Couriers typically carry just two officers – one in command and one with specialist communications and security duties. All other personnel are ratings, who tend to spend longer in couriers than officers do but will eventually move to some other role.

Survey

Survey operations, whilst unglamorous, are an essential part of the Confederation Navy's duties. Forming the larger part of the Survey and Exploration Command's remit, survey operations are mainly to do with ensuring system maps are kept up-to-date. A number of specialist survey vessels exist, carrying powerful sensor equipment to allow remote charting of moons or planetoid fields. However, the majority of survey work is carried out by patrol vessels identical to those operated by Internal Security Command. Indeed, a survey ship is considered to be a patrol asset and sometimes a survey mission will be launched with a secondary goal of putting a warship into the target system.

Survey work is mostly routine and often quite dull, revolving around mapping planetary surfaces and bodies in space and comparing them to known data. However, survey ships poke around in places that commerce-protection patrols do not visit. They occasionally stumble upon a pirate or smuggler base, or some other secret installation. It does not matter to a pirate whether the frigate overhead is under the control of Internal Security Command or Survey and Exploration Command; the end result is the same.

Whilst survey work is, on the whole, less glamorous than a fleet deployment it is important to the security of the Confederation and the smooth flow of merchant traffic. Surveys are not restricted to physical objects; a frigate might be tasked with observing traffic in and out of a particular starport or patterns of commerce between a major world's many starports. It may also be carrying out some other mission under the guise of survey work. A system survey is a typical cover for an intelligence-gathering operation, which may be carried out by dedicated intelligence ships posing as survey vessels or an intelligence team might be placed aboard a survey vessel.

Exploration

The Solomani Confederation has an open frontier to rimward. Exploration has been ongoing for many years, with survey vessels following up to increase the depth of knowledge available. Most exploration work is carried out by older warships that have been converted to their new role. Many of these vessels are permanently based at forward exploration-support installations, with crews ferried out to them when a new mission is planned.

Most exploration is relatively short-ranged, with a specific objective such as visiting all the worlds in a particular cluster or learning more about a specific race encountered by an earlier expedition. General exploration tends to take place further out, with ships or task forces venturing into wholly unknown areas and carrying out an initial reconnaissance of the region.

Exploration missions are usually carried out by task forces rather than solo ships, although vessels may break off from an expedition to investigate specific targets. For example, a recent mission deployed nine Tenzing-class exploration vessels supported by a converted light carrier. During the first phase of the mission the Tenzings proceeded in three groups of three along parallel axes, with the carrier following. Each group of three ships followed a leapfrog pattern, with one ship pushing ahead, another staying behind to investigate a find and the third moving fast to catch up to the leader after completing its own investigation.

At a point well rimward of the Confederation border, three of the Tenzing-class vessels detached and began proceeding to spinward. Their mission has not been publicly disclosed, other than a vague report of a 'long-range exploration mission'. Nothing has been heard of these vessels since but they are not posted as missing. The other exploration vessels and their support ship continued rimwards to a prearranged rendezvous point, then began exploring out from this location whilst the carrier conducted detailed surveys and scientific research in a smaller group of systems. Despite the inevitable surprises and setbacks, the mission returned safely to its forward base, whereupon most personnel transferred back into Confederation space. Queries from interested parties about the other three ships have elicited no response beyond 'believed to be still engaged in their scheduled mission.'

The greatest exploration project to date was an expedition to the Perseus Arm – the next spiral arm of the galaxy out from the one containing Charted Space. Although the mission was widely publicised, few concrete details are available. It is commonly reported that some seventeen vessels were sent starting in 1050. However, the great fanfare with which the project was launched soon faded away. Data on the expedition, other than its launch and the systems it passed through in the early stages, is restricted. This has led to speculation that the mission met with disaster, or was perhaps a cover for some other endeavour.

Solomani Confederation Marines

The Confederation Marines are directly subordinate to the navy, rather than being a separate organisation. They are used as a rapid-reaction strike force but their primary duty is to serve as ship's troops and security force for the navy. They are trained for shipboard boarding and counter-boarding actions and spend most of their time protecting naval bases and vessels in starports. The marines also serve as an elite protected-forces unit trained in assaulting asteroids, highports, space stations and vacuum worlds. They are not intended for extended planetary deployments. The Confederation Marines lack the support infrastructure that the army possesses, relying instead on navy vessels and personnel for logistic and medical functions.

Confederation Marines are typically equipped with combat armour, although some units are trained in battle dress operations. They do not have the grav armour and artillery Imperial Marine regiments are equipped with, expecting to rely on navy fire support and ship-launched fighters instead. Typically, Confederation Marines land aboard assault starships or in naval shuttles and pinnaces, although some units may use jump capsules.

Like the navy, the marines also find themselves used in non-combat scout and survey missions, serving as landing parties on exploration ships. Marine officers are encouraged to take degrees in fields useful for planetary exploration, such as planetology and biology or archaeology.

THE CONFEDERATION ARMY

The Army of the Confederation has a broad remit covering peacekeeping, disaster relief and suppression of insurgency as well as warfighting against internal and external foes. Most of its assets are deployable but the army does garrison and operate several large fortresses on key worlds. These are unusual, in that normally an army force deployed to a member world for defensive purposes would be seconded to its Home Forces but the Twelve Great Fortresses of the Confederation and the many smaller ones are Confederation territory. They cooperate with, but are not part of, the Home Forces of their host worlds.

The army trains to defend and assault worlds, and to fight wars on them. It has no space assets – that is the preserve of the marines – and relies on the navy to get its forces to the ground. Once there, the army fights as an all-arms force with ground, aerospace and maritime elements deployed as needed. Aerospace assets may operate at high or low orbit but are ground-based for the most part. Most army units are trained to operate out of a navy carrier or transport but this is more in the manner of troops advancing out of a base in vehicles rather than fighting as marines.

The army is administratively organised as regiments, most of which have multiple battalions. The majority of regiments have a long history, although it is common to raise entirely new regiments under some circumstances. This usually happens when there is insufficient time to ensure the personnel of a new battalion are properly indoctrinated into the history and culture of an existing regiment. In such cases it is deemed better for the new formation to make its own history than to trust a newly formed unit with the responsibility of upholding the glorious name of an existing regiment.

Regiments are not fighting formations. Those are built up as needed from whatever forces are required or are available. Most higher formations are theoretically transient but in practice a brigade, division or corps will usually exist for a decade or more, moving from one deployment to another and seeing many units transferred in and out, before disappearing in the next round of reorganisations. Some of the more famous higher formations have been granted permanency, becoming the equivalent of regiments in terms of unit culture and history. Being assigned to one of these permanent formations is a great honour; rival regiments compete hotly for a place in a top formation, which in some cases has led to long-lasting feuds between units.

Most formations are 'square', consisting of a three-and-one assignment of sub-units. Typically the three are the primary-function sub-units with a support or specialist formation completing the unit. The support unit might be a composite of different types, especially in smaller formations. In addition, each unit has a field headquarters, to which may be attached additional support assets and a base headquarters that maintains records and handles the unit's administration.

For example, an infantry battalion will normally be composed of three infantry companies and a field headquarters. It will also have a support company containing a small number of specialists in a variety of roles: typically this will be aerospace defence, field artillery, reconnaissance and field engineering. Thus an infantry battalion has a measure of all-arms capability, enabling it to deal with most threats without calling for external assistance. This is particularly important when a battalion is deployed far from support, as can happen in a widespread conflict. Units are encouraged to be self-reliant but willing to request assistance if needed.

The majority of infantry battalions of the Solomani Confederation are formed as lift infantry, with each battalion possessing sufficient grav transport for the entire force. Grav APCs carry aerospace defence or fire support weapons and the support company has its own transport. A lift infantry battalion is entirely grav-mobile using only its own resources but cannot maintain its transports beyond the short term. Workshops are available at the unit's base and mobile maintenance formations are assigned to formations when they are fielded.

Infantry forces are trained to undertake a variety of tasks from disaster relief through counter-insurgency work to straight warfighting. It is a matter of principle that any infantry battalion can undertake any infantry task. However, a great many specialist infantry formations exist, which are optimised for particular deployments. Not all of these are equipped as lift infantry.

Cavalry battalions are considered to be an infantry force, whereas in some forces 'cavalry' is used as a term for armoured troops. Cavalry formations use lightly armoured, fast grav transport vehicles backed up by fire-support platforms, with troops capable of fighting from their vehicles or dismounting to operate as conventional infantry. Cooperation between infantry and vehicle elements is much closer than in the conventional infantry formations. Despite the open-terrain connotations of the name, cavalry units are primarily used in urban, and sometimes mountainous, areas where their ability to hop from one high point to the next allows a rapid assault or mobile defence to be undertaken. Most support weapons are of a direct-fire sort, employed aggressively and often at short range. When part of a larger formation, cavalry units are either grouped into specialist urban combat formations or form the supporting element of an armoured reconnaissance unit.

Commando battalions are special operations units specialising in raiding, reconnaissance, the sharp end of counter-insurgency operations and unconventional warfare. Commando battalions are sometimes deployed as a whole unit, especially in major conflicts, but are more commonly a source of detachments to be sent out as needed. Commando units will sometimes be able to infiltrate ahead of an invasion or may stay behind after a retreat. They may cause diversionary mayhem well away from friendly forces in a major conflict or conduct reconnaissance close to them. Commando teams are also used for hostage-rescue and high value target elimination operations. Their greatest contribution, however, is usually in terms of intelligence painstakingly gathered in the face of an enemy or potential enemy.

Confederation Army Equipment

Most personnel likely to come into contact with the enemy are equipped in TL12 combat armour, with a few units using battle dress. Rear-echelon personnel are usually equipped with a lightweight (and cheaper) version of combat armour, which still provides protection against gas, chemical weapons and the like. For low-key operations the army uses fatigues, body armour and a helmet in 'city green' – a green-grey colour that blends into a typical city backdrop surprisingly well.

Gauss weapons are preferred as small arms and light support weapons, with plasma and fusion guns at the squad level. Battle dress equipped troops may use gauss or plasma weapons depending on their mission or a mix of types. Lasers are generally unpopular other than as multi-use sniper rifle/designator systems. A variety of one-shot missile launchers are in use, all capable of engaging flying or ground targets. Light missiles are designed for use against aircraft and soft-skinned vehicles whilst heavy launchers are intended to pose at least some threat to tanks. Drone/missile launchers are also used, enabling an infantry unit to obtain its own reconnaissance data and make indirect guided attacks on bunkers or personnel concentrations.

Heavy Infantry battalions do not have an organic transport element, as they are intended to undertake a specialist role. There are two kinds of heavy infantry. One is equipped with battle dress but not trained for orbital insertion to the battle area. Such formations are rare but are sometimes deployed as assault troops, usually operating in conjunction with heavy grav tanks. The more common kind of heavy infantry is equipped with far more support weapons than a standard infantry force and intended to provide a strong defence in an urban or otherwise cluttered area. Heavy infantry formations of this sort are well-equipped to knock out armoured vehicles either from ambush or as tank-hunter teams.

Jump Infantry battalions are trained to make orbital assaults using atmospheric entry capsules. Jump troops are equipped with battle dress and are more commonly deployed as conventional assault forces than making a meteoric insertion from orbit. Jump infantry units frequently have to operate without much support, so make use of battle dress variants acting as support weapon, electronic warfare and combat engineering platforms. Where possible, however, a jump infantry force will be rapidly backed up by grav vehicles carrying weapons, supplies and conventionally equipped troops.

Light Infantry battalions are equipped the same as lift infantry but have no grav transport. A lift infantry unit may be converted to 'light' status by handing off its transport element to the logistics pool or another unit. This is done when the unit is to operate in an environment where vehicles are little use, such as within an arcology. Light infantry are also deployed aboard some starships, essentially using assault shuttles instead of their vehicles. Highly mobile warfare conducted in this manner is referred to as 'bouncing around' with sub-units switched rapidly from point-to-point. Particularly 'bouncy' units may eventually be designated Naval Infantry and receive additional training, becoming the nearest equivalent the Confederation has to Imperial Marines.

Protected Forces battalions are equipped for combat in environments requiring protective equipment. All units are trained for vacuum operations, typically on airless worlds or bodies with an unbreathable atmosphere. Some formations are additionally equipped for extreme environments such as corrosive-atmosphere worlds. Infantry trained for underwater operations are included within the protected forces classification. Typically, a 'Protfors' battalion will be equipped much like a standard infantry force, with its own organic aerospace defence and other specialist personnel. Higher formations may include artillery, armoured and other supporting forces, all similarly trained for protected-forces operations.

In addition to specialist and standard infantry battalions, the Confederation Army fields the usual array of combat forces. Aerospace defence, artillery and armoured battalions are usually teamed up with infantry to create a combined arms force; whilst infantry battalions might be deployed solo it is unlikely any other unit would be. Transport, engineering, electronic warfare and medical battalions are also assigned to forces as needed or may be broken up to provide detachments where they are needed.

Field Formations

Detachments of specialist troops may be sent to carry out all manner of tasks and occasionally a company of infantry may be assigned to guard an installation but fielding such small forces poses an administrative problem. When a small force is deployed in this manner, it is usually part of a multi-service – or even multi-agency – task force that will be assigned an overall commander and staff.

It is not uncommon to find these task forces in remote areas where military or economic infrastructure is being developed. For example, the Confederation wishes to build an intelligence-gathering and processing centre on a backwater world. The installation will be operated by the Confederation's intelligence service but whilst it is being built a team from Naval Intelligence is on hand to advise.

The primary defensive force is an infantry company and an aerospace defence detachment, with an additional security company operating in the surrounding area. The project also involves a civilian construction force. By tradition, groundside projects of this sort are commanded by an army officer, with other agencies placing forces under their command for the duration. This project would be commanded on a temporary basis by an army major, with a small administrative staff. Respective units would retain their own internal chain of command but answer to the overall commander.

Larger formations are more formally organised. When a battalion is deployed as a single unit or reinforced battalion with a few supporting units, the battalion's commanding officer will usually be the most senior officer present. Higher formations are almost always assigned a general officer (an officer above the rank of colonel) and a staff plus a security element.

Brigades are typically commanded by a brigadier and built on a standard three-and-one arrangement. Most commonly this is three lift infantry battalions and a grav-mobile artillery battalion but other formations exist. An armoured reconnaissance brigade might have three light armoured battalions and a cavalry battalion; an artillery brigade might have three artillery units and an aerospace defence battalion. Grav tank units are either grouped as one tank battalion to three lift infantry, creating an armoured infantry brigade or three tank to one lift infantry creating an armoured brigade.

Divisions are typically commanded by a major-general and use a variant of the standard three-and-one. Typically a division will have two brigades of the primary troop type and one of a similar type, plus a brigade-equivalent of supporting or specialist troops. For example a lift infantry division might have two lift infantry brigades, an armoured infantry brigade and a supporting force grouped as a brigade for administrative purposes. This provisional brigade might contain an artillery battalion, armoured reconnaissance battalion, aerospace defence battalion and a composite workshop and support battalion. To this would be added various units, attached to the divisional headquarters, as required.

Corps are typically commanded by a lieutenant-general and contain two or more divisions or division-equivalents plus supporting troops, which might be organised into divisions, brigades or temporary formations. It is common for a corps to have only one division of a particular unit type and for other formations to be composed of whatever units are available. A variety of support formations may be attached at the corps level. For example, a corps might contain a neatly organised lift infantry division plus a provisional infantry division containing one lift infantry brigade, an armoured infantry brigade and a couple of independent specialist infantry battalions. In addition it has an artillery brigade and an armoured reconnaissance brigade plus a number of independent battalions.

Armies are typically commanded by a full general and contain two or more corps. An army would normally have responsibility for a continent-sized theatre of operations or a specialist function that might see its units spread out over a wide area. For example, an important world may be defended by multiple armies. Most are set up for ground combat and comprise multiple lift infantry divisions and other forces. In addition the world has a large complement of maritime forces organised as an army and two aerospace combat armies operating a mix of ground-based defensive weapons and aerospace vehicles.

Where a theatre of operations has multiple armies or where cooperation between different services is of the utmost importance, a Marshal of the Confederation may be appointed to take overall command. Typically, a Marshal given command of military forces will have experience of serving in one of the arms they command but this is not always the case.

THE HOME FORCES

All forces operated by the member governments of the Confederation, as opposed to the Confederation itself, are termed Home Forces. Elements of the Home Forces that are equipped to the same standards as the Confederation's military and trained to operate alongside them are termed Home Guard. All of a member government's Home Forces may meet Home Guard standards but this is rare. More commonly, only a proportion are equipped to this standard as it is expensive and may not meet the member government's needs.

Member governments are required to maintain sufficient forces to control their territory and enforce Confederation law but what forces are used to do this is left to discretion. The Home Forces of worlds located close to troubled borders are often subsidised, creating tough fortresses on the likely path of an enemy's advance. Member governments can also offset the cost of their Home Forces by providing a proportion of their units to the Confederation. These formations move to Attached Forces status for the duration of the assignment. This setup allows Home Forces units to gain experience and permits the owning government to maintain more and better forces than would be otherwise possible whilst at the same time demonstrating active loyalty to the Solomani Confederation.

Most member governments maintain a sufficient naval force to provide for orbital defence and in-system patrol. Only the richest have navies of their own and these are typically little more than patrol and escort forces intended to protect commerce in nearby systems. A few major worlds have powerful fleets however, which have at times been used for internal conflict. The Confederation may or may not intervene in a blockade or even combat situation, depending on how the political winds are blowing.

Ground forces are typically optimised for aerospace defence, urban security and the ability to make fast mobile sweeps into a troubled area. As with naval forces, few member governments feel the need to maintain an army capable of fighting a major war. There are exceptions, however, especially along the borders. The more militaristic member governments eagerly recruit personnel who did not quite make the grade for service with the Confederation armed forces or who have left early in their career for some reason. Some Home Forces are notorious for not being choosy about who they take on, providing they have received Confederation training. This can lead to an officer being discharged from the Confederation forces under suspicion of serious wrongdoing, only to show up again as part of an Attached Forces unit.

Home Forces units, by definition, mostly operate in the territory of their owning government. However, dispensation can be given for operations elsewhere. One government can receive assistance from another, for example, without requiring permission from the central Confederation authorities. Units designated as Home Guard are in addition liable for activation by the Confederation military for any suitable mission or assignment, although this is to be done with due regard to the member government's own security needs.

The existence of the Home Forces is a hotly debated point in Confederation politics. There are those who think the Confederation would be a more stable place if members were not allowed to operate forces capable of invading one another. However, this seems to be impractical to many. A Confederation that does not trust or permit its member governments to defend themselves is not worth belonging to. In any case, the Home Forces serve a useful purpose, that of ensuring all member governments can protect their territory from incursions by Imperials, Aslan or anyone else. During the Solomani Rim War, Confederation forces were tied down on worlds that had failed to provide for their own defence and reforms pushed through by General Secretary Wolfe were intended to ensure that never happened again.

An oft-overlooked function of this arrangement was to mitigate the effects of demobilisation after the Solomani Rim War. The Home Forces offered employment for many veterans and continue to do so to this day. Personnel transferring to the Home Forces after service in the Confederation armed forces are normally assigned equivalent rank or slightly less. Those with a very good record may be offered a promotion upon joining. Seniority gained by Confederation personnel on secondment to the Home Forces is normally respected when they return to Confederation service but the converse is rarely true. It is uncommon for someone to transfer from Home Forces to Confederation service and those that do usually drop a rank or two unless they are extremely well-regarded or fulfil a vital role that cannot otherwise be filled.

The laws of the Confederation mandate a minimum budget percentage to be spent on Home Forces, which can be exceeded if the member government wishes. This is augmented by a variety of programmes intended to get additional forces out of member governments. One example is the 'Loyalty Ships' programme, implemented about 20 years ago. Member worlds are encouraged to fund one or more warships in addition to their Home Forces contribution and to gift them to the Confederation. These ships are always named in a strict sequence, with the member government's name followed by a designated name for the first in the line. Thus anyone encountering CSS Aquitaine Guardian is reminded of the loyalty of the Aquitaine government. Guardian is the third designated name, so the observer knows Aquitaine has funded at least three ships for the Confederation Navy, above and beyond its normal contribution.

Home Forces units are usually a mix of regulars and reservists, with some units permanently embodied and others maintained as a skeleton to be filled out with activated reservists at need. Reserve units may be equipped to Confederation standards but are never designated as Home Guard – such formations have to be ready to serve anywhere, at any time, just like the Confederation's own units.

The Home Forces' primary mission is to ensure Solomani worlds can offer effective, sustained resistance against sudden raids by small or medium size Imperial or Aslan forces. This means that they are expected to train to fight the Imperial Navy and Imperial Marines or Aslan ihatei. Since most Confederation worlds are significantly less advanced than the TL15 elite troops of the Imperium, their doctrine is non-conventional, based on lessons learned in the defence of Terra and other worlds during the Solomani Rim War.

While Terra did eventually fall, the price exacted by its defenders, which included not only regular troops but also many thousands of civilian guerrillas, was high enough to stop the Imperial advance in its tracks. Had the Confederation Navy forces not already been expended in scattered defence of frontier worlds, a counterattack might have been possible that could have ended the war on more favourable terms. Confederation planners see the Home Forces as the lynchpin of a defence-in-depth strategy, soaking up and pinning down invaders until the navy can cut them off and the army can liberate lost territory.

The Home Forces are part of a set of measures intended to enable a Confederation planet to resist long enough to be relieved. This requires designing key military and political infrastructure such as communication systems and logistics to enable them to withstand external shocks from a superior enemy force. The pervasive, cellular structure of the Solomani Party is employed in conjunction with the Home Guard to organise civil defence measures such as evacuation, food distribution and the continuity of government. Civil defence drills against planetary assault are regular affairs on border worlds and not neglected even on worlds far from the border. Naturally, these activities have the useful benefit of serving the Cause by keeping the Solomani population anxious about external threats.

Home Forces are trained to put up an effective fight even against the more advanced forces of the Imperium. Given the technological disparity, much emphasis is placed on the ability to offer an effective threat to grav tanks and battle dress equipped marines using lower-technology equipment. Thus a larger than usual proportion of Home Guard forces are heavy infantry, with light anti-armour and anti-materiel weapons liberally distributed among infantry formations. This reduces mobility but ensures at least marginal effectiveness. In addition, units are prepared to engage in planetary guerrilla warfare, emphasising urban combat. Although command and control are centralised under normal circumstances, Home Forces units are expected to be able to function under decentralised command.

CHAPTER - SEVEN

SOLOMANI SECURITY

SolSec is the internal intelligence agency of the Solomani Confederation. Its purpose is 'the maintenance and protection of the Solomani Cause against all enemies'. SolSec grew out of the Solomani Party's Committee of Consolidation, an organisation intended to resolve disputes of dogma between Party factions and the Delegate Protection Group that provided security at the early General Party Congresses.

After the Solomani Confederation became a state, SolSec turned into that state's major intelligence and security agency, acquiring professional staffs from various planetary security forces and Solomani supporters with ex-Imperial Ministry of Justice and Naval Intelligence veterans. However, it never lost its fundamentally political orientation.

During the troubled period leading up to the Solomani Rim War, SolSec began working with the Monitors, a patriotic citizen's watchdog group that exposed government and corporate corruption in the Solomani Rim. The monitor programme was extended to reporting on Imperial subversion but its success saw it greatly expanded into a network of public observers and secret informers that pervades Solomani society. Today, SolSec has far greater power than its main rivals, Imperial Intelligence or Imperial Naval Intelligence. However, most of its power is directed inward against its own population.

SolSec has broad, constitutionally granted powers of investigation and arrest. These give SolSec jurisdiction over military personnel in a manner that has caused great resentment at times. The Political Officers assigned to warships and military formations are notorious, although they rarely deserve their bad reputation. Although the embedding of SolSec personnel in the military is important, SolSec's most potent capabilities come from the many undercover or sleeper agents it inserts into targeted organisations. These are supplemented by an extensive monitor programme, which in concert with highly automated data processing systems give it a society-wide capacity for surveillance exceeded only by the Zhodani thought police.

ORGANISATION

SolSec is divided into several directorates and sections.

Office of the Coordinator

The office of the SolSec Coordinator manages the affairs of the three directorates. Under the Coordinator are various sector and subsector offices, as well as departments such as Archives, Personnel, Training and Finance. The office also includes the Committee of Consolidation, now an advisory body that directly reports to the SolSec Coordinator.

The Committee of Consolidation decides what ideologies constitute a real threat to the Solomani Cause and disseminate it to the other directorates of the agency. The Policy Committee also acts as a final star chamber that sits in secret judgement whenever a question comes up regarding disloyalty of any Solomani Confederation citizens too important to be summarily arrested. This includes admirals, generals, members of the secretariat or ministry and leaders of planetary governments or Party factions. This would apply to anyone with or directly connected to a person with SOC 14–15.

In the early decades of the Solomani Confederation 'Consolidation' was often a rubber stamp for the general consensus of the High Council. In the century since the Solomani Rim War it has become more scientific, commissioning detailed, secret academic studies to determine what levels of control or openness will best serve to sustain the Solomani state and how permitting or suppressing particular ideas, philosophies and factions will have long term socio-political trends affect the Solomani Cause.

This has slowly moved it into the position of engaging in psychohistorical manipulation, albeit only within the limited sphere of information control. The very existence of these studies is highly secretive and often the academics involved in reviewing or gathering sociological data involved have no idea where their actual funding is coming from. SolSec's ability to engage in low-level psychohistorical research is greatly enhanced by the vast resources of personal and political information it possesses in its database and the enormous computing power it has available to collate this data. SolSec is nowhere near the capability of performing Hiver-level psychohistorical manipulations but its ongoing operations do give it a reasonable chance of detecting ongoing attempts to manipulate the Confederation's population.

SolSec Directorates

SolSec is subdivided into three directorates and these are divided into various sections and offices, each of which is a huge organisation in their own right. Within a given directorate there are field agents, secret agents, paramilitary or security personnel and interrogation experts as well as ordinary analysts, administrative and support staff.

A SolSec headquarters complex on a mid-size world will have a building for each directorate and a floor for each section, and probably a private landing area for a few SolSec courier ships at the world's main starport. A tiny SolSec office in the startown of a backwater world may only have a few multi-tasking agents from the Internal Directorate.

Internal Directorate

This branch of SolSec is focused on operations within Solomani Confederation society. It has the highest status within the agency and the largest size; it also administers the SolSec monitor program. The Coordinator-General of the Internal Directorate frequently becomes the next SolSec coordinator. The Internal Directorate is ubiquitous throughout the Confederation. Offices are normally found on any Confederation world with population 1,000 or more and a Class A, B, C or D starport. Smaller or less important systems may not have offices but probably have at least one monitor or covert agent present.

The Internal Directorate benefits from the extensive volunteer monitor system and commuter networks that automate most data processing and analysis. Automated systems do sometimes result in citizens being investigated and in rare cases arrested by mistake. If so, further diligent investigation will usually uncover something questionable the citizen or an acquaintance has done wrong, justifying a warning or penalty.

The Political Section is the most important branch of the Internal Directorate. Its mission is to ensure the loyalty of Confederation politicians, ranking Solomani Party members – especially those with key positions in world governments – the Secretariat or the ministerial bureaucracies.

The General Section has a broader mandate. It is charged with maintaining the loyalty of the average Solomani citizen outside of government. Its focus is those involved in activities that can influence large numbers of people, such as people in the media, education and business. They organise and analyse reports provided by the monitor programme and open sources and take action where necessary, sending agents to warn or arrest the individual or informing employers or business partners.

The Internal Directorate's Navy and Army Sections are concerned with political surveillance to ensure the loyalty of the armed forces. This includes stationing of SolSec officers in military bases and task forces as observers, as well as sleeper agents within military careers. Since 1001, SolSec officers have also handled all criminal investigative activities within the Solomani Army and Navy. This means that military personnel can never be sure whether a SolSec agent is investigating something mundane, like a sexual assault or misappropriation of military stores, or something political, like their commander's commitment to the Cause. They also investigate any charges of war crimes or atrocities connected to the army, navy or Home Forces.

The Counter-Intelligence Section is tasked with eliminating foreign agents within the Solomani Confederation. The similarity between Imperial and Solomani cultures and the many Imperials of Solomani background make this task difficult, although some aspects of the work are simplified by SolSec's extensive extra-legal powers. Counter-Intelligence operates in all areas of Solomani culture but is especially diligent in ferreting out spies within SolSec, the Party and the Military. Considerable effort is also spent in hiding strategic activities such as factories building military components or the construction of military bases and planetary defences on border worlds. Excessive zeal can lead to the arrest or even elimination of innocent travellers who accidentally stray too close to such activities.

The Integration Section has the responsibility to ensure that non-Solomani of mixed race, Vilani ancestry or non-human origin, including primitive indigenous natives (prindigs) are properly integrated into Confederation society. This means monitoring and handling those individuals or populations that are causing problems. To this end, the section recruits low-level agents and monitors from non–Solomani citizens so that cooperative members of such non-Solomani minorities can better help police their own kind. The Integration section also monitors non-human aliens that are legally visiting the Confederation. For example, when Aslan or Hivers visit

the Confederation the Integration section may assign agents to unobtrusively ensure they do not become involved in local politics. Sometimes more direct and overt measures are taken, such as the assignment of 'cultural aides' to assist the visitors. This does help avoid problems due to the outsiders' unfamiliarity with, or insensitivity toward, Solomani culture, laws or politics, but also makes close monitoring very easy.

Another important role of Integration is to assist planetary Solomani Parties or their governments in dealing with racial unrest among non-Solomani. The Integration section maintains special paramilitary units ranging from squad to battalion size. These are trained to assist political cadres in quietly and efficiently removing troublesome elements without the need to involve ordinary police, Solomani Army or Home Forces.

The Monitor Programme

The Internal Directorate administers the SolSec monitor programme. A monitor is a trusted Solomani citizen working as a volunteer operative for SolSec. They file reports on the actions and behaviour of those around them, especially any actions that may reflect on their loyalty to the Solomani Cause or affect the safety of the state. Reports are filed into the local world computer net or at SolSec offices at any Class A, B or C starport.

Monitors may decide whether or not to reveal themselves; they are not required to be secretive. Some choose to work openly, believing their presence will make others more loyal. This also allows them to act as advisors to those who are unsure what to do for the best. Others believe they are more effective if they conceal their status. SolSec offices will confirm a public monitor's identity if queried but will protect the identities of those monitors who wish to remain anonymous. Civilian monitors are unpaid and have no formal position with SolSec. Other citizens may view them as patriotic, politically aware concerned citizens – or as sinister informers.

Monitors operating within the armed forces are similar to their civilian counterparts. Covert monitors 'belong' to SolSec and will be extracted once their identities are revealed whereas overt monitors are part of their parent service and can continue in their career for as long as they like. The option is always available to transfer into SolSec in some other capacity.

In the event of serious disloyalty, a monitor is expected to step in and correct the situation. Typically this means filing a report and waiting for SolSec to send someone to make an arrest. However, sometimes direct action is required. A monitor will grab a gun and defend the bridge if mutineers try to take over and there are some who are placed for their combat skills rather than simply as observers and reporters. These individuals are termed 'enforcers' and may or may not fulfil the usual role of a monitor. More commonly they are inserted into a military force or corporate body to protect senior officials – essentially the enforcer is a bodyguard the principal does not know about – or to eliminate them if they take certain actions. Enforcers typically have standing orders on what to do under which circumstances, carrying out their normal duties until they are needed.

External Directorate

The External Directorate is charged with engaging in intelligence and covert operations intended to further the Solomani Cause beyond the Confederation's borders. In particular, it is responsible for monitoring and often manipulating Solomani Party organisations and Solomani militants inside the Imperium. It also attempts to keep track of all Solomani Confederation citizens who travel outside the Confederation on non governmental business. Although it cannot monitor all of these people, External Directorate will shadow persons of interest and if necessary, make use of them for its own purposes. It is the SolSec branch likely to be involved in non-Intelligence black operations in the Imperium. The External Directorate also operates in support of pro-Solomani movements in the various pocket empires and border states located along the rimward, Hiver and Aslan frontiers.

External Directorate is also in charge of gathering foreign intelligence especially information of political, military, corporate or scientific significance. Its operations here overlap and sometimes compete with Confederation Naval Intelligence and the Office of Diplomatic Intelligence within the Ministry of Foreign and Colonial Affairs but SolSec tends to perform riskier operations. Its chief tactic is recruiting foreign citizens as spies, especially those of Solomani descent living in the Imperium.

The External Directorate is organised into sections responsible for particular areas of operation, such as the Aslan border, the Solomani Rim or the Hiver frontier. The main area of operations are the Imperial-occupied subsectors of the former Solomani Sphere but they do run agents beyond this region, such as a section assigned to work Capital to gather intelligence on political developments at the Imperial court. Their primary targets include the Imperial nobility, diplomatic corps, bureaucracy and military and well-placed individuals working for megacorporations or border world governments. For the last three decades, SolSec has mounted covert operations aimed at developing agents within the households of Imperial nobility; a recent defector claimed these high-placed agents include the spouse of an unnamed subsector duke within either Alpha Crucis or the Solomani Rim.

Technical Directorate

The Technical Directorate is in charge of assisting the other directorate through the maintenance and development of specialised scientific and technical capabilities and equipment. It develops and maintains everything from SolSec grav vehicles to cybernetic implants. The Technical Directorate uses all the techniques available to the paramount intelligence agency of a huge interstellar state: advanced electronic surveillance, massive computer systems to process information, agents with cybernetic and biotech implants, personal courier starships for its elite agents, secret training programs that produce psion units or brainwashed assassins and billions of Credits worth of exotic intelligence and counterintelligence gadgetry.

Its major focus is information technology, from the advanced synaptic computer networks that analyse monitor reports to sophisticated systems for tapping into data networks. It also has access to much of the civilian information infrastructure of Solomani society – SolSec routinely taps television cameras, phone systems, post offices and computer networks within the Confederation. SolSec has infiltrated all Solomani corporations that produce hardware and software for the Confederation's major planetary comm networks and have installed back doors into almost all Confederation-manufactured computers and communications networks. The Technical Directorate's back doors grant DM+4 to attempts by SolSec operatives to tap or hack into any Solomani-made computer device or network, unless it is one that SolSec or the military installed.

This has been going on for centuries, so the Confederation's elite are well aware of it. In fact, many senior Solomani Party members and business people quietly import communications equipment and software from the Imperium or Hive Federation to keep SolSec from listening in. Of course, if SolSec discovers such activity, it will certainly lead to questions of loyalty and there is also a chance agents of Imperial Intelligence services will have a back door into such imported equipment.

Life Under SolSec

The majority of the Solomani Confederation's citizens regard SolSec as a perfectly necessary security agency. In fact, SolSec's monitor program allows citizens to blow off a lot of steam by complaining about problems in local planetary regimes that might otherwise fail to listen to them. SolSec does pay attention to these complaints and whilst isolated rants about a pet peeve can be disregarded the opinions of ordinary citizens are a useful way of gauging the situation and finding out what the local authorities are trying to hide.

If someone in authority is failing to deal with a problem, they are damaging the image of the Solomani Party and harming the cause. SolSec's response in that situation is to correlate the information with other reports and if there seems to be a real problem that is potentially breeding dissent, to have a quiet word with the offending planetary official or that person's superiors so they know they are being watched and will hopefully correct their behaviour out of fear of further consequences.

SolSec primarily works by creating a climate in which people internalise from an early age what they should and should not say. The uniformity of public thought is ultimately a matter of sensitivity to the ideological atmosphere and is largely the result of people's actions themselves, rather than the heavy hand of state censors. Publishers, educators and public speakers in the Solomani Confederation rarely do anything that they imagine might risk SolSec disapproval. Therefore, they never stray far from the party line.

In the Solomani Confederation, Social Standing also governs how much attention the SolSec secret police are likely to pay them. SolSec may ignore reports that a SOC 6 store clerk is demonstrating pro-Imperial sympathies, perhaps merely sending a report to a local Party cell. They are less likely to do so if similar reports implicate the SOC 9 owner of the city's major air/raft dealership. SolSec will almost certainly intervene if they have reason to believe someone of SOC 10+ is disloyal, since that person's status places them in a position where their disloyalty could damage the Solomani Cause.

Authoritarian governments live in fear of SolSec. The sleeper agent program of SolSec is not designed to ensure there is someone watching over everyone's shoulder. That is what the citizen monitors are intended to do. Instead, it exists to allow SolSec the power to intervene quietly against the powerful leaders of the Solomani Party hierarchy and planetary governments. A world's dictator may be surrounded by mercenaries, planetary secret police and regular Home Forces but they can never tell whether their personal chauffeur, paramour, the commander of their army or the person who cleans their toilet is actually a deep cover SolSec agent trained to act against them if they misbehave. The more important they are, the more likely one or more people close to them are enforcers.

Freedom of Speech

Solomani are free to believe what they want and publicly express those beliefs, provided what they choose to say can be plausibly expressed within the framework of Solomani Party dogma. It is not good form to publicly say the Solomani Confederation should not try to regain Terra because the Imperium is too powerful to defeat or is a force for good. On the other hand, it is fine to argue for détente because the Confederation must build up its strength before starting a new war or even that war is unnecessary, as the Imperium's internal corruption will cause it to fragment on its own.

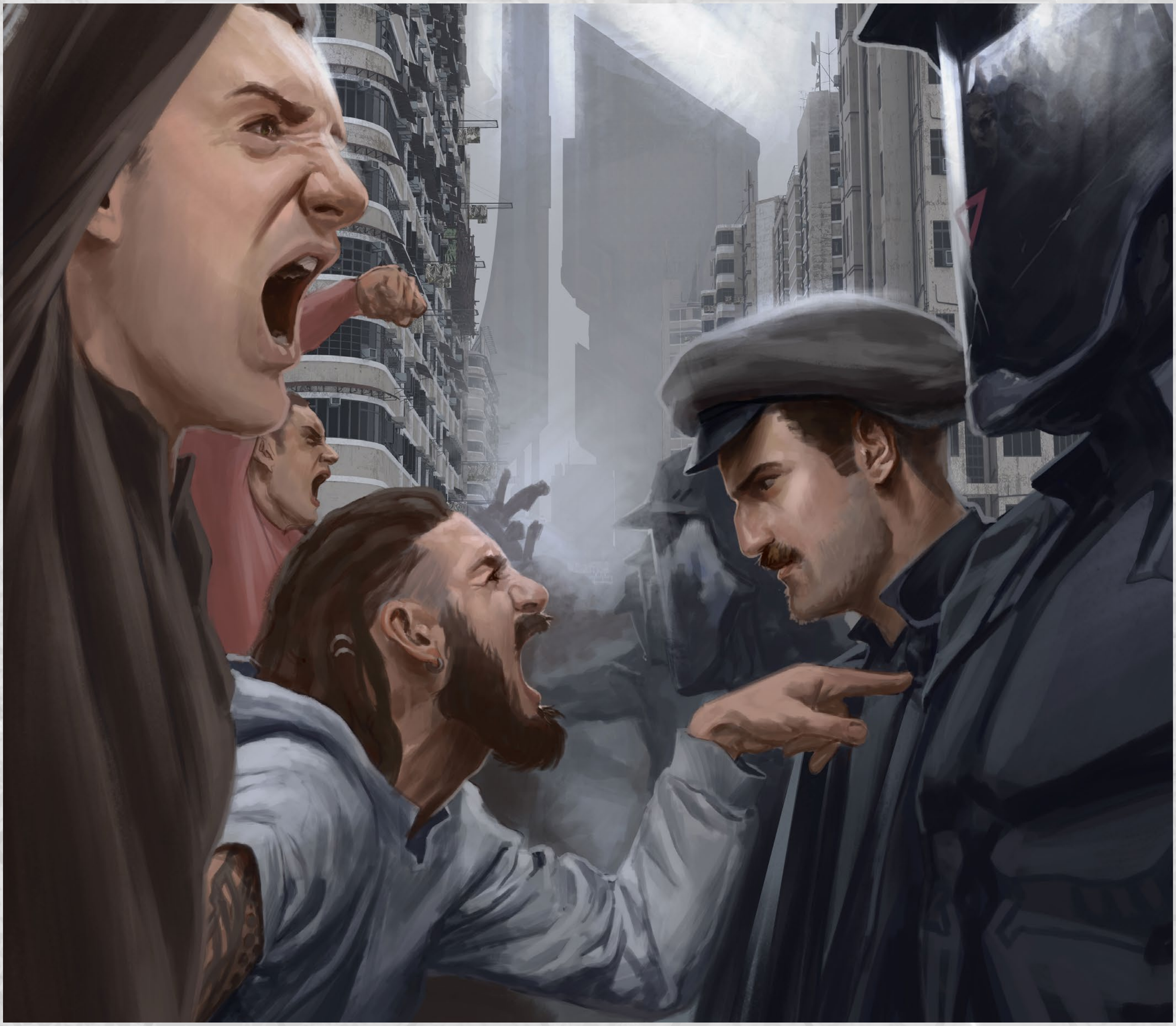
On the local level, it is acceptable to criticise a Solomani Party-run bureaucracy for inefficiency and blame its department heads. It is not acceptable to claim that the same department would run better if instead of Solomani, members of the Imperium's administratively-talented Vilani or Bwaps were staffing offices. Nor is it wise to point out the reason things at the department were slow last week was because SolSec had arrested a key department head for disseminating an underground news report criticising Home Forces for committing atrocities quelling an anti-Solomani rebellion.

SolSec Field Forces

SolSec has a large paramilitary arm that provides security detachments to important individuals and protects key installations. In addition it has heavily armed pseudo-military formations used for a variety of purposes. These include specialist anti-riot units equipped with a mix of lethal and less-lethal weaponry. Negotiation and peaceful dispersion are preferred options and this is greatly facilitated by the presence of SolSec troopers in urban security battle dress. Deploying such a unit is very much an iron fist in a velvet glove situation; often unarmed negotiators will approach rioters and politely ask them to disperse. Anyone who wants to air their grievances will be listened to. Of course, threatening the negotiators will elicit a heavy-handed response and on some occasions negotiators make use of the same battle dress as their colleagues.

SolSec also has conventionally armed urban combat forces, typically organised similarly to a regular army cavalry force. These troops are trained in specific aspects of urban warfare; they can fight for a city like regular forces but they are most effective in their primary role. SolSec's urban combat units are optimised for the rapid seizure of political assets and infrastructure, and for their security. Thus whilst the army is battling its opposite number for key military positions, SolSec is trying to take control of the power and water infrastructure, broadcasting stations and senior enemy personnel. On the defensive, their task is to prevent the enemy from taking these objectives but most of all to ensure the continuance of effective local governance.

SolSec operates a great many starships, most of them transports or intelligence-gathering vessels. Some have a more direct role, carrying out boardings and inspections of passing ships. This is effective in reducing crime but it is also an audit of local security measures. If SolSec is catching dozens of shiploads of contraband in a system where local authorities have made few interceptions, something is clearly awry. It may be that the local authorities simply need advice and training to increase their effectiveness but if the omission seems wilful SolSec's investigators will turn their attention to the world government.



CHAPTER-EIGHT

COMMERCE, LAW AND ECONOMICS

The Solomani Confederation is an open, thriving economic region rivalling the most productive regions of the Imperium. The interstellar government does not regulate commerce involving Solomani businesses. People are free to run businesses and make money as long as they pay their taxes and do not rock the social boat by questioning the basic underpinnings of society. Interstellar business taxes are kept low.

Confederation citizens may be born into a variety of circumstances but for those of racial Solomani background there are plentiful opportunities to rise by achieving success and fame in particular fields or becoming rich through business success. The influence of the Solomani Party is also important. Job applications, bank loans, business deals or license applications are all expedited through the support of influential Party members.

Contacts in the Solomani Party are useful in all aspects of business. Often support can be garnered by giving the local or regional levels of the Party an opportunity to invest. There is some corruption but this is mitigated by the activities of SolSec. Not only are Party members watched for signs of graft but SolSec may decide a business venture is important enough to the economy that it should receive an elevated level of protection.

Although commerce within the Confederation is quite open, there are tighter restrictions on business deals involving foreign states, especially the Imperium. Regulations prevent foreign individuals or companies from purchasing controlling interests in Solomani companies. They also restrict and heavily tax the operations of companies whose corporate headquarters are based outside the Solomani Confederation, such as megacorporations. Foreign companies can operate if they partner with Confederation firms in relationships that ensure Solomani receive control, local jobs and an equal share of the profits, and that such operations do not undercut native Solomani industries. SolSec spends a surprising amount of its time ensuring these regulations are followed.

The absence of megacorporations – with the exception of Transstar – means that the Solomani Confederation has more business opportunities for smaller firms. There are no economic superpowers that dominate particular fields. The Solomani population is growing on its newer frontier worlds and many worlds have markets that are still undeveloped. The rimward border is wide open for investment and exploitation, with the Confederation offering substantial tax credits for investments in those regions.

Making up for the lack of megacorporations is the greater economic role taken by the Confederation Armed Forces. The navy and to a lesser extent the army own many businesses, mostly connected with the production of munitions or vehicles. The military corporations differ from government-run arsenals and navy yards in the Imperium by also marketing their products in order to make a profit. Customers include local Home Forces and an approved list of mercenary units, client states and independent worlds to rimward and trailing of the Confederation. Some sales are also made on Ithklur worlds in the Hive Federation and a few Aslan clans the foreign ministry are attempting to influence.

Foreign military sales are a source of friction between different factions. The Confederation is usually careful not to release any secret or cutting-edge technologies but concentrates on combat-proven designs whose service record is also a selling point.

SOLOMANI CORPORATIONS

The factionalism in the Solomani Confederation makes the emergence of sphere-wide companies difficult. Most Solomani companies are sector-wide or smaller. The term sector-wide is somewhat of a misnomer, however. Most such companies have operations or business interests that extend into bordering regions of adjacent sectors as well.

Transstar

Transstar is the only Solomani corporation to achieve megacorporation status, benefiting greatly from its early support of the Solomani Movement. The largest transportation firm in the entire Solomani Sphere, Transstar is a merchant line running freight and passage service throughout the entire Confederation. Now mainly owned by the Solomani Party, it is a primary source of Party income. Jobs at Transstar also serve as a prime source of Party patronage. This also goes both ways: a post as regional manager of Transstar is often a step on the path to appointment to the Solomani High Council's Ministry of Economics. Transstar offers a discounted travel rate (75% of fare) to Party members. Transstar is believed to be heavily infiltrated by Solomani Security.

Transstar's passenger line has a reputation for efficient but somewhat unfriendly no-frills middle passage service. Some of the older passenger liners are rather grim second-hand colony ships or demobilised troop transports purchased during an austerity period after the Solomani Rim War. Recent effort has gone into changing this perception, particularly through improving high passage service on major sector routes connecting to Home. Transstar's pride is its Taj Mahal jump-4 fast luxury liners, whose internal fittings and standard of service rivals any similar design in the Imperium, with prices to match. Transstar also operates orbital highport facilities throughout the Confederation.

CONFEDERATION LAW

Solomani Confederation Law, often incorrectly termed Solomani Law, is a body of legislation and precedent whose basis is set forth in the Solomani Confederation's founding Charter. Its framers derived it from Imperial High Law along with elements of the legal codes of the Old Earth Union, Terran Confederation and Easter Concord. Confederation Law sets rules for the interactions between world governments and the Confederation government and the basis by which regulations can be made for matters like interstellar trade.

Confederation law applies everywhere, including protectorates and on Confederation territory such as naval bases or warships. It covers the same general category of crimes as those illegal in the Imperium: murder, theft, fraud, resisting arrest, treason and so on, and in addition makes it illegal to spread 'anti-Solomani propaganda'. This is rather broadly defined and along with laws against 'conspiracy to subvert the Solomani Charter' can be taken as disallowing criticism of the Solomani Cause.

Confederation law contains guarantees of individual rights to a fair trial and the extension of law to governments – that is, a government may not murder its own or foreign citizens, unlawfully seize their property or discriminate against specific groups. However, all individual rights are subordinate to what the Charter calls the Fundamental Principle, the right of governments to perform those actions that are necessary to 'uphold and defend the Solomani Cause'. One fundamental right that is guaranteed is the freedom of any adult citizen of pure Solomani birth to join the Party.

One effect of these laws is that a government facing a possible revolution or with a large non-Solomani minority can trample on basic human rights almost at will as long its actions are justified as protecting the Cause. SolSec will often perform a lengthy investigation to see whether, for example, a religious cult was persecuted for 'legitimate' reasons, such as it preaching sermons or spreading dogma that questioned the legitimacy of the Solomani Cause or illegal ones, such as the cult merely having a divergent faith to that of the ruling elite.

Every so often, a member government does such a poor job that the High Council or majority opinion in the Secretariat determine it is dragging the Solomani Cause down. If corrective measures are ineffective, the government will have to be replaced. The quietest way to do this is a SolSec-sponsored covert operation, often using sleeper agents. If this fails overt action may be required. The General Congress of the Solomani Party can intervene by suspending the government's Party status or the Secretariat may vote to sanction it. The bar is set high but the Secretary General can ask the Secretariat to vote on a resolution declaring a state of emergency that permits intervention by the Confederation Army and Navy.

LOCAL LAW

Local laws are at the discretion of the member government or the organisation running an independent installation, with the exception that Confederation Law also applies there. Local law enforcement agencies are expected to enforce Confederation Law but often do not for various reasons. Thus it is possible to commit a 'Confederation' crime and be ignored by local law enforcement until they are forced to act for some reason – typically the arrival of agents from the Ministry of Justice or a request from an official.

Policies on law enforcement also vary widely. There is no mandated form of law enforcement agency or security service, although most member governments follow standard practices. On some worlds law enforcement is part of a wide-remit 'civic protection service', which also includes maritime rescue, fire and urban rescue, ambulance and possibly orbital rescue services. In other areas these functions are kept separate.

A member government's laws apply throughout its territory, which typically means its entire home star system. The Confederation Navy, Ministry of Justice and SolSec also have jurisdiction and may be better placed to deal with some infractions than planet-based law enforcers. The apprehension of felons in the far outsystem can result in some negotiation between local and Confederation officials, as can the arrest of individuals wanted on several worlds. In this case possession is nine-tenths of the law enforcement process, although it may be desirable to prosecute the felon in a particular place. Some worlds have a death penalty, others do not; the prisons of some are notoriously tough or easy to escape from.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TASK FORCES

Particularly serious offenders may become the subject of a Ministry of Justice task force. This usually includes a few front-line personnel but will primarily be made up of experts such as accountants, forensic scientists and experienced detectives who will co-opt local law enforcement or military personnel as needed. Task forces are often granted the use of a starship with extensive forensics and investigative facilities. Ships are armed for the arrest of fugitives who have a starship but are intended to function as a mobile base providing top-end facilities to the investigative team.

When not chasing a particular suspect, task forces sometimes go 'on the circuit', travelling between less technologically developed worlds to offer their services. A visit can clear dozens of cold cases in a matter of days, bringing TL14 forensics equipment to bear on crimes that would never be solved using mid-technology equipment. The effectiveness of these task forces is such that many criminals are caught just by announcing the arrival of the task force and seeing who bolts.

Another useful tactic is to offer a turn-yourself-in deal for those facing very serious penalties on their current world. In return for surrender and a confession the criminal is guaranteed a fair trial and a more lenient sentence. The Ministry of Justice is more likely to cut a deal in return for information than a member government, although a criminal who surrenders to the Ministry of Justice hoping to stay out of the clutches of SolSec will be disappointed. Requests for transfer of custody are almost always granted if the surrendered individual turns out to have committed politically sensitive crimes.

SolSec and the Ministry of Justice sometimes put together joint task forces. In this case SolSec is looking for threats to the Confederation as a whole and political wrongdoing, whilst the Ministry of Justice is investigating 'ordinary' crime. Cooperation is generally good but disputes over jurisdiction have occasionally crippled major operations.

SALVAGE AND PROSPECTING

Much of the Solomani Confederation's law is ultimately derived from old Terran legal systems, notably maritime law as recognised by the United Nations. There is no such thing as 'international waters' in much of the Confederation, as a member government has jurisdiction over its home solar system and any others it possesses. Thus any salvage or prospecting activity in a governed star system must be licensed with the authorities. A basic short-term license is cheap at Cr1000 plus Cr100 per day but carries with it a duty to properly document finds, pay a percentage of value to the licensing government and to report any suspicious activity encountered. A longer-term license has a much lower daily cost but carries with it the same duties and responsibilities.

Ungoverned systems are protectorates of the Confederation and subject to the same laws. Licenses can be obtained through regional offices that are typically found at major worlds. Any Class A or B starport will have a salvage and prospecting license service, along with claims registry and associated legal matters. The chances of being caught in an ungoverned system are lower than in one where a mainworld government is patrolling its own territory but penalties tend to be stiffer.

Member governments typically impound unlicensed ships for a period and charge a release fee, which neatly avoids the need for complex prosecutions over often trivial activity. On the other hand, the Confederation Navy or the Ministry of Justice is likely to prosecute and may seize unlicensed ships. Crews are often declared to be suspected of spying for a foreign power and handed over to SolSec for another round of interrogations.

Minor salvage can usually be kept or sold, providing the correct authorities get their percentage. Major finds are subject to compulsory buy-out at a reasonably fair rate. No matter who found it, a major mineral strike or the wreck of a highly valuable ship belongs to the government of local jurisdiction – or so the law says. In practice, strikes are often worked for a time under the radar, so to speak, and wrecks may be stripped before they are declared. Despite stiff penalties a significant 'grey salvage' industry continues to thrive.

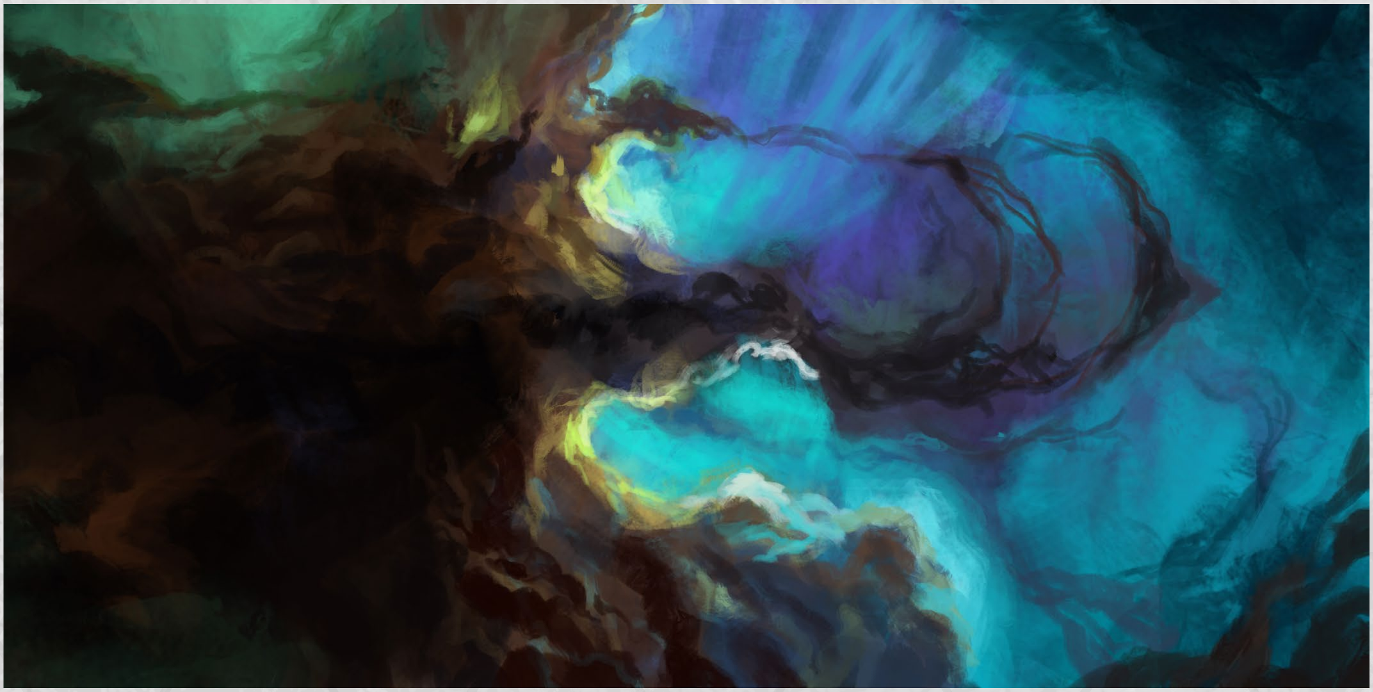
COMMUNICATIONS

Naval couriers, typically of jump-4 capability, ply constantly between military installations, major starports and the holdings of politically significant member governments. These carry a great deal of routine information as well as classified data and instructions or orders. This function was originally carried out by the express boat network inherited from the Imperium but has been replaced by armed naval couriers whose crews hand-deliver data packs at each destination. Since this information is not broadcast it cannot be intercepted other than by attacking the courier or the handover party. The handing-over of the data case is always done with great formality; a little piece of navy ritual endlessly repeated on starports all over the Confederation.

Occasionally a member government may be embargoed or subjected to a withholding of information. In the event of a major transgression this is a very public denunciation by the Secretariat but often a member government can be given a nudge in the right direction by nothing more than the regular naval courier. In this event the communications officer goes through the usual formalities then formally refuses to hand over the data case – which may be blank but retains its symbolic value. This ritual has been compared to the Confederation thumbing its nose at a member government but indicates quiet disapproval, which can be corrected without a major public incident. The most minor version of this practice involves just one courier refusing to hand over the data; the next one returns to normal service once the point has been made. This is sometimes enough, since the official data is of great importance and the implications of withholding it is still greater.

Whilst the official 'internal' data moves at jump-4, routine communications travel more slowly. The Confederation uses a system of subsidised and contracted mail ships, which must be fitted with a mail distribution system and secure cargo areas for sensitive items. These plod along the mains or around the clusters at one or perhaps two parsecs a week, with the result that news travels quite slowly through the freely available channels. However, many shipping lines operate faster mail ships between key ports, in return for fees from the governments served or the governments may operate their own. These mail lines are similar to the x-boat routes of the Imperium, although they are served by private vessels that usually carry modest amounts of cargo or a few passengers at a premium rate.

This system ensures that all citizens will get news from far away sooner or later, whilst those governments that want to arrange their own high-speed news and mail service can do so. The benefits are usually made available to the citizenry, although exactly what information is released is carefully monitored. Corporate bodies and member governments use this system to stay ahead of the economic situation, whilst information control is always useful when something serious happens a few parsecs away. The local government may be weeks ahead of its citizens in knowing about a crisis, enabling it to make preparations or warn its people as appropriate.



CHAPTER-NINE

WORLDS OF THE CONFEDERATION

The Solomani Confederation is characterised by old, well-developed worlds in some regions, fading into an open frontier to rimward. In general, worlds facing the Imperial or Aslan borders tend to be heavily militarised, whilst those in the safer areas are much less so. Many worlds have unique cultures drawing on old-Earth influences or the society of early colonies. Of course, after hundreds of years the memories of old Earth are inevitably distorted.

TERRA: THE SOLOMANI HOMEWORLD

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The homeworld of the Solomani is Terra, once called Earth, is in the Sol subsector of the Solomani Rim. The former capital of the Solomani Confederation, Terra is now under military occupation by the Imperium.

Terra is the third planet of the star Sol, a solitary yellow G2 V star. Sol is used in the Imperial and Solomani scientific systems as the basis for defining stellar mass, radius and luminosity; Sol has a value of 1 in each of these figures. The system has four rocky planets, four gas giants and many smaller bodies. Jupiter, the largest of the gas giants, is used as a benchmark to which other giant planets are compared. A 'Jupiter Mass' is a standard unit of measurement just like the mass of Sol.

The Sol system has several inhabited bodies, notably Mars and the moons of Jupiter. In-system commercial traffic is heavy, with multiple spaceports on most inhabited bodies. It is common for 'old worlds' to have settlements or economic assets elsewhere in the system but Terra has far more than most. This is due to the exploitation of the whole system before the invention of the jump drive. Once cities were established offworld, they tended to continue. Thus although rebuilding of sections has taken place throughout the long history of habitation, there are landmark buildings on Mars or the moons of Saturn which date back to the Interstellar Wars.

Currently, all traffic inbound to the Sol system is required to make jump emergence close to Terra itself, no matter where in the system it is destined, and to receive clearance codes before proceeding elsewhere. A vessel caught without a valid code is subject to seizure by the Imperial authorities. This tough stance is actually a relaxation of the original system, whereby all traffic was required to emerge in a designated region well short of the mainworld and make a lengthy transit to the system's main highport. This was intended to space traffic out in terms both of time and location, enabling inspections to be made of every single ship arriving.

Terra itself is 12,742 kilometres in diameter and has a standard atmosphere. 70% of the surface is covered by water, which divides the land into seven continents. The climate overall is temperate, with extremes at the poles and the equator. Like other bodies in its solar system Terra is a comparator, with 'Earth-like' and 'Terra-normal' being common terms used to refer to near-ideal planets.

Terra has one moon, Luna, which is tidally locked to Terra. Luna is used as a naval base and research laboratory. In the past it was heavily populated but today it is home only to the installation staff and their dependents. Luna was the first extra-terrestrial member of the Terran Confederation.

Terra has a population of 40 billion with considerable ethnic diversity. There are three giant starport complexes, LaGrange in north eastern Australia, Phoenix-Mesa in south western North America and AECO in North Africa. Terra's greatest city is Rio de Janeiro; South America, the Caribbean and southern Africa are the most urbanised and industrialised regions. There are also extensive underwater cities. Climactic and geological changes and mega-engineering projects have altered the planet since Terrans went into space. These notably include the warming of Siberia and greening of the Sahara desert.

Terra is under military occupation, with an appointed Imperial governor managing a civil service bureaucracy backed up by a substantial Imperial Marines garrison. At present, Terra is permitted local police forces but has no planetary army, although this will change when military rule is withdrawn. There are plans to lift military rule in 1109 if Terra remains quiet, although a lengthy transition period is likely before Terra becomes a fully self-governing member world of the Imperium.

The physical and emotional scars of the Solomani Rim War have been mostly repaired and the world has been largely pacified. Ruthless counter-insurgency operations in the 1040s broke the back of the resistance movement and the last major guerrilla groups have been worn down or induced to give up the struggle. Terra's Amber Zone travel code was rescinded in 1064 and despite sporadic incidents of violence since, Terra is considered safe to visit. It is the third most popular tourist destination in the Imperium, after Capital and Vland. This popularity is not merely among those of Solomani descent. Tourists and scholars of many races are drawn to Terra by its legendary status as the birthplace of all Humaniti. Visitors enjoy its timeworn cities and monuments, remnants of authentic Solomani ethnic cultures, enormous biodiversity and reputation for the best Solomani cuisine in the Imperium.

Citizens from the Solomani Confederation visiting the Imperium can and do travel to Terra but should expect to endure careful scrutiny by Imperial authorities.

NAME: TERRA

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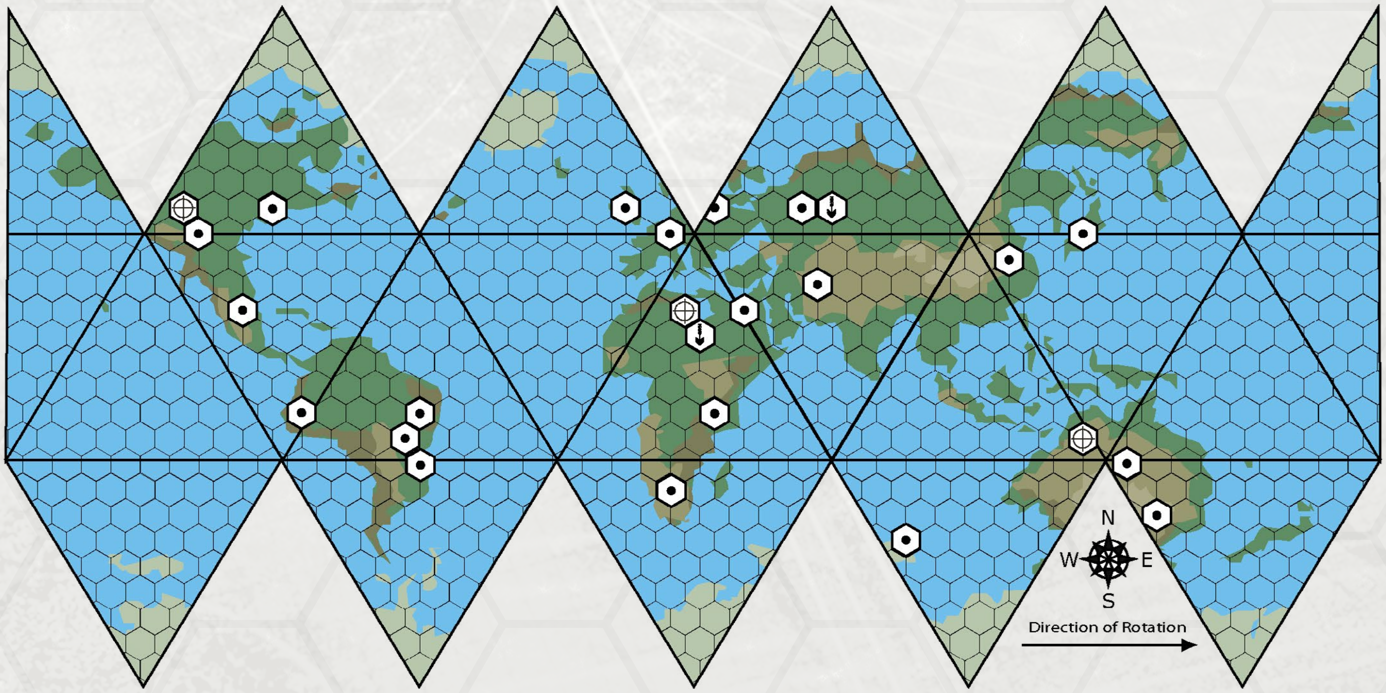

City	Starport	Farming
⊙	⊕	↓

Hex Scale	World Gravity	Mean Equatorial Temp
1000km	1.0G	30ºC

HOME: THE NEW SOLOMANI CAPITAL

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The fall of Terra to the Imperium forced the Solomani to establish a new capital. Their choice was Home in Aldebaran, some 30 parsecs from Terra. Home was selected for its close physical similarity to Terra, its distance from the Imperial border, its pure Solomani population and its central location within the Confederation.

Home is located in Aldebaran. Its primary is Dril, a solitary G2 V star nearly identical to Sol. Home is the third planet from Dril, orbiting it at an average distance of 152,000,000 kilometres with a period of 376.24 days. It rotates on its axis every 26 standard hours. The system contains two gas giants and six terrestrial planets in addition to Home. An inner asteroid belt close to Home's orbit makes for regular spectacular meteor showers and poses occasional danger. A specialist detachment of the world's Home Forces takes care of any threatening rocks.

Home is 12,422 kilometres in diameter with a standard atmosphere. 60% of the world's surface is covered by water, dividing the surface into three continents and a large archipelago with many island subcontinents. Home has no moon, making its oceans fairly placid but its night darker than those of Terra. The stars are brighter by comparison and many constellations are similar to those seen from Earth.

With less axial tilt than Earth, Home has less severe seasonal variations than Terra. However, it has experienced dramatic climactic shifts over hundreds of thousands of years, possibly due to its lack of a stabilising moon. These impeded the development of large and complex animal life before humans arrived. Today, imported Terran flora and fauna dominates the world's ecology. Attempts are being made to create biological reservations for local species but the likelihood is that Home will be entirely taken over by invasive species before long. Home has a lower albedo than Terra, resulting in a slightly higher average surface temperature, despite Home being further from Dril than Terra is from Sol. Most land masses have large interior deserts that are uncomfortably hot but most of Home is an agreeable place to live.

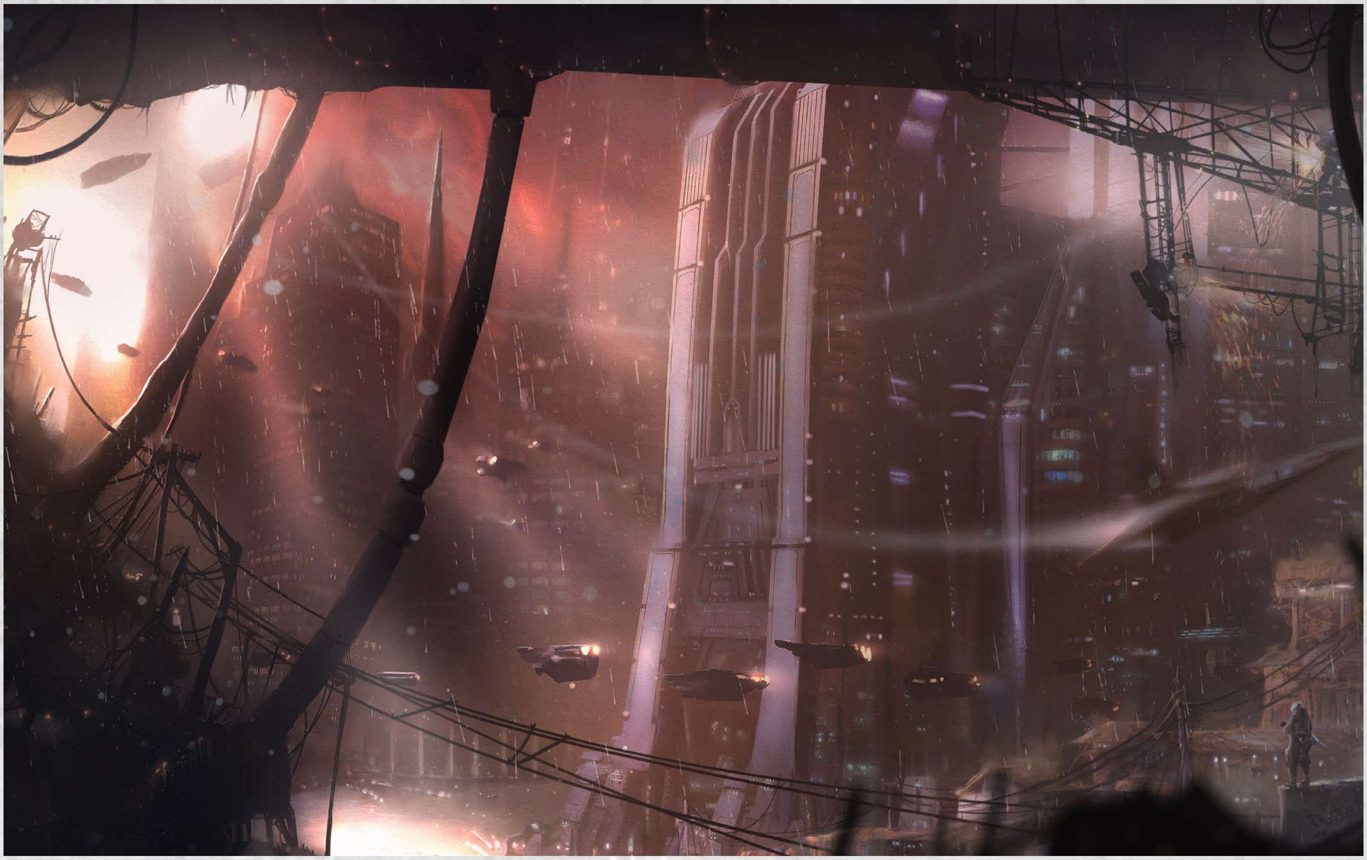
Home was settled during the Rule of Man by the Sancterrists, a hardworking Terran agrarian religious sect opposed to high technology. Content to maintain a TL5-6 society, the Sancterrists barely noticed the Long Night and were not unduly troubled by recontact. During the 700s they found Solomani Party ideology fit well with their own religious beliefs. Membership in the Solomani Autonomous Region and then the Confederation brought increased off-world trade and investment. Society developed a more business-oriented elite that was willing to accept controlled change and technical development, at least around the starport and capital city.

Home still retained its sleepy agricultural character until 1000. As the Solomani Rim War turned in the Imperium's favour, important citizens and industrial plants were evacuated from threatened front-line worlds. Home received hundreds of thousands of these evacuees, including key government and military families and recuperating soldiers. As the war came to an end, the planet's pleasant character, Earth-like conditions and central strategic location made it a natural choice for a new Confederation capital.

The last century has seen rapid economic development, some of it perhaps too rapid. The population of 1.1 billion includes many transitory inhabitants and those living in orbit. Home is the headquarters of the Solomani Party, SolSec and the Armed Forces and, as a result, security levels can be oppressive in major centres. The majority of the population are employed in government bureaucracies or interstellar businesses, although there are also extensive agricultural and industrial sectors. There are still regions, especially near deserts and in the mountains, that retain their pastoral character and their traditional religious beliefs and some of these communities still try to live at TL5-6. They have drifted toward more extreme interpretations of their original faith and can be unwelcoming to outsiders.

The capital, First City, is the site of the Secretariat's General Assembly and the architectural oddity of SolSec Central, popularly known as the Octopus. High above them, the Solomani High Council meets in secure chambers inside Resolution, Home's hive-like orbital highport. Resolution was carved from an asteroid that was pushed into orbit; 'Wolfe's Rock' as it is popularly known is also home to Ivan Wolfe Naval Base and the adjacent Albadawi Naval Academy. It has a large Confederation Marines garrison.

Home is cosmopolitan, with humans of many different colours, ethnic backgrounds and a Babel of accents from all sectors of the Confederation. However, with the exception of some Aslan and Hive Federation embassies and trade missions, there is a near-total absence of permanent non-Solomani inhabitants. Restrictive immigration and security policies ensure only Solomani may settle or work on Home.



JINGLESWELT: THE FIRST GREAT FORTRESS

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Located in the Staai subsector of the Dark Nebula, Jingleswelt orbits Jingleswelt Primary, an M1 (red) main sequence star that has 10 other terrestrial planets and four gas giants. The system was colonised early in the human push into the Dark Nebula and ultimately ended up right on the border with the Aslan Hierate. This was in no small part due to its powerful fortifications.

Jingleswelt was not a garden world but habitable enough to be easy to colonise. Most of the land is concentrated into a single supercontinent, which is very dry in the interior. Initial settlement mainly took place along the western seaboard, with secondary hubs elsewhere. As the situation elsewhere in the Dark Nebula worsened, refugees poured into Jingleswelt and caused rapid expansion of these minor colonies. With resources stretched very thin these new cities were rough-and-ready, contrasting with the more carefully planned settlements of the western seaboard. Even today the layout of the eastern cities is suboptimal, as generations of new building followed the same street plans. Segments of the cities were completely cleared and rebuilt on a more logical pattern, creating a patchwork of well-laid-out and chaotic districts.

One reason for Jingleswelt's popularity as a refugee destination was its defence network. This was initially little more than a ring of military bases around the capital, mounting anti-ship missiles in ground-launch platforms. Underfunded and incomplete, the Brachmann Ring – as the chain of forts was known – was still an effective deterrent. It was gradually expanded and strengthened, then augmented by orbital defences and additional installations covering the rest of the planetary surface.

Successive governments became almost obsessed with their planetary defences, to the point where 'Fortress Jingleswelt' became something of a tourist attraction. Even today, it is a stop on some of the Great Tours; well-established routes for wealthy tourists to see the sights of the Confederation. The Museum of Planetary Defence has an enormous hotel complex that always has a few rich or famous people in residence. Naturally, when the Twelve Great Forts were declared, Jingleswelt made its case to be recognised as the earliest to be established

Meson Guns and Planetary Defence

The Terrans invented the meson gun late in the Interstellar Wars period and used it win decisive victories against the Vilani Empire. Although the Imperium itself is presently more advanced in meson gun technology than the Confederation, especially in the production of battlefield and turret-sized weapons, large meson accelerators are a major element of Solomani weaponry. Especially important are the deep meson gun installations that the Solomani Home Forces operate to protect crucial border worlds and major worlds. These are a central feature of many TL10+ planetary defences.

Meson beams can pass through any form of matter so burying the weapon and its support facilities deep below a world's surface creates a weapon system virtually immune to conventional attack. Only another meson accelerator can effectively engage such deep meson guns and planetary weapons can be built with greater size and range than shipboard installations. Since a meson gun has no firing signature, targeting it is impossible unless its coordinates are known. Discovering details of the existence, firepower and location of deep meson gun sites on border and strategic worlds in the Solomani Confederation is a primary goal of Imperial military espionage operations. Information relating to their construction is tightly controlled and carefully policed by SolSec.

Deep site meson weapons have two weak points. Aiming a meson gun relies on a network of external sites. These will be scattered across the planet, in orbit and sometimes even on moons, so completely destroying these networks is nearly impossible. However, a sustained bombardment can eradicate the large antennae needed to target spacecraft in high orbit, dramatically reducing the mesons weapons' range. Since the mobile fire control equipment that is needed for hitting planetary targets can fit in a truck or APC, a deep meson gun will be a continuing threat to any planetary invasion until all opposition is neutralised.

Meson guns require tremendous power, 500 to 1,000 gigawatts for a typical installation equivalent to a spinal mount. Standard imperial doctrine is to use neutrino sensors or intelligence information to locate and destroy the large fusion reactors that provide this power. While a meson gun site may draw power from multiple stations in a planetary grid as well specialised buried facilities, a sustained bombardment can cut it off from its energy source.

To counter this, Solomani planetary defence installations built since the Solomani Rim War have begun to install deep underground geothermal core taps feeding high-energy capacitor arrays (similar to those used in jump drives). These power sources eliminate the neutrino signature of the emplacement but are less powerful and more expensive to construct than fusion reactors. The need to recharge the capacitors limits this emergency rate of fire to one shot every few hours or requires the use of smaller installation equivalent to bay-size weapons. This limits the ability of the meson gun as a factor in a fast-moving space battle but significantly complicates matters for planetary sieges and ongoing invasions.

A related development used on a few TL13–14 worlds with deep oceans is the space defence submarine. This is a large nuclear submarine with a single bay weapon-sized meson gun installation, which patrols in the deep ocean or under a planetary ice cap. Although firepower is limited, mobile meson gun submarines are harder to track with neutrino sensors than static installations. Engaging them may require sending grav armour or starships to operate underwater.

and therefore the 'First Great Fort'. This status is disputed, since Jingleswelt's claim goes back to the earliest construction of its defences, which were hardly great at the time.

None of the other Great Forts are tourist destinations; most are restricted-access sites protecting important worlds or installations. The Twelve Great Forts were declared in 1022, in what was mainly a propaganda exercise intended to demonstrate the resilience of the Confederation. Essentially the most powerful fortifications were chosen as showcases of Confederation military might, although the criteria were strict. Dispersed fortifications protecting an entire world were not counted; a Great Fort had to be a region of a planet with particularly dense military installations. Not coincidentally, this facilitated maps, charts and interactive video tours, which contain misleading information but are overall accurate and – more importantly – impressive.

Jingleswelt built deep-site meson guns as soon as the technology became available but did not construct submarines for use as mobile mounts. Since its cities were located on a supercontinent, heavy-duty rail transport using a triple-rail system on a very wide gauge was the primary means of moving large cargoes. A number of mobile aerospace defence missile systems were already concealed among the commercial trains; it was inevitable that Jingleswelt would attempt to build a mobile meson gun mounted on a train. According to the Museum of Planetary Defence, several such weapons are now in service but there is real doubt about whether a functional weapon was ever deployed.

Society on Jingleswelt is heavily militarised, with the commander-in-chief of the world's Home Forces acting as head of state. The world acts as a hub for cross-border commerce and relations with most nearby Aslan clans are cool but polite. Despite strict controls on private ownership of weaponry, members of the Home Forces Volunteer Reserve are permitted to keep their issued small arms and equipment in their homes. On the rare occasions Aslan ihatei have tried to raid Jingleswelt they have been repelled with ease.

ELATION: RIMWARD BORDER WORLD

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Elation lies on the very rimward frontier of the Solomani Confederation, in the Taurea subsector of Aldebaran. The system contains seven other terrestrial planets and a gas giant, none of which are known to have permanent settlements. Immediately to rimward is a two-parsec gap, creating a natural border; the nearest jump-2 crossings are in the Marrakesh and Theta Aurigae subsectors. It is thus likely that when the border is pushed out it will be to these subsectors and not Taurea. If so, Elation will remain a backwater frontier world for some time to come.

The world itself is tidally locked, with a thin atmosphere and little water. A small city houses almost the entire population, located in the twilight zone between the 'bright' and 'cold' faces of Elation. The temperature difference means that a constant wind blows from dark to light, occasionally gusting strongly enough to make conditions hazardous. The city is surrounded by industrial farms that are domed to protect them from wind-borne dust, whilst the settlement is protected by a natural windbreak formed by rugged cliffs.

Elation has a minimal industrial base and can support a local TL7, although a few more advanced items are available. Its sole industry is mining, with temporary camps dotted about both faces of the planet. Mining is carried out without much regard to environmental damage, with open-cast pits and their associated spoil heaps abandoned when a deposit is played out. The prevailing cold-to-warm winds have sculped the spoil heaps in some places, creating an elongated dune shape with a 'tail' of deposited dust for many kilometres downwind.

Elation is a possession of the Solomani Confederation but not a member. Like many other undeveloped worlds it has no government of its own and is instead administered by a governor based on nearby Weinberg. A small staff at Elation's one city deals with matters such as claims registry and shipping licenses and a private security force keeps order. Those accused of major crimes are usually shipped to Weinberg in a secure low berth and tried there, whilst minor offences are normally punished by enforced work on behalf of the community.

Elation's Class B starport was constructed in anticipation of much greater economic importance. The discovery of new mineral deposits prompted interest from some of the larger mining concerns and a plan to expand the port was rushed through. As a result Elation has a half-built highport that may never be finished. The section that was completed was originally of a good standard but is run-down now and in need of an overhaul. It is rather uninviting, which gives Travellers a poor impression of what conditions are like planetside. In fact, quality of life is moderately good on Elation but not sufficiently so to justify the world's name.

CHAPTER - TEN

HIGH GUARD: SOLOMANI

The Solomani people developed their own traditions and preferences regarding starships during their early history and these later melded into the Imperial culture. However, the Solomani have always resisted Vilani and other Imperial influences, so did not adopt the custom of jump dimming. This is very much a 'Vilani-Imperial' custom, dating back to a time when power plants were only just adequate to operate the jump drive.

Other preferences have always been a feature of Solomani spacefaring, although they might have been overlaid during the years of Imperial membership. In some regions these habits never went away; in others they have been re-implemented since secession. Most noticeable is the presence of dedicated stewards aboard warships. In the Imperium, food preparation is a general-crew task and whilst experts might exist there are no specialist crewmembers. The Solomani, on the other hand, consider well-prepared food to be essential to morale. Preserved rations can be heated up by an unskilled rating but wherever possible properly trained chefs will be included in a crew. The Confederation Navy has elevated cooking under difficult conditions to an art form and can usually manage to put good food in front of its crewmembers no matter what else is going on.

Solomani vessels often have a 'ship's cat' – which might be some entirely different kind of animal or even a robot. These creatures are kept aboard ostensibly to deal with vermin and might occasionally make a kill. In reality however it is simply a matter of tradition – a ship should have a ship's cat that lives in the galley and makes an adorable nuisance of itself. An admiral's review would not be complete without the Officer of the Watch having to deal with an RCID. 'RCID' is navy shorthand for Random Cat-Induced Disturbance and has taken on a wide meaning. In this context an RCID is any unexpected and alarming but ultimately harmless occurrence.

Security tends to be a priority aboard Solomani ships. Mutinies and hijackings are no more likely in the Confederation than anywhere else but considerable attention is paid to making ships difficult to take control of. Much of this is down to design philosophy; passenger areas are separated from sensitive control spaces, with access heavily restricted, and the ship's systems are typically subject to more lock-outs.

However, SolSec has infiltrated most manufacturers of shipboard security and monitoring systems in the Solomani Rim. Its operatives have access to backdoor programs and devices that can often bypass and access standard starship security. SolSec agents receive DM+4 when hacking such systems. Thanks to these back doors, a competent SolSec undercover agent who is posing as a passenger or junior crewman will be able to quickly penetrate any commercial starship's security systems and may know more about what is going on aboard than the ship's own officers. A penetrated security system will ignore the agent's movements when they want it to and may feed information to their own personal computer. Those services and agencies that know about this hole in their security are constantly trying to find and eliminate the loopholes.

SOCIAL STANDARDS

As in other areas of society, pure-blood Solomani are likely to be found in the upper echelons of any starship crew. Ordinary crew will normally be pure Solomani or mixed blood human. Neo-chimps may sometimes be found in jobs like mechanic or cargo hand. Dolphins rarely serve aboard ships due to life support issues but do have a reputation as good pilots.

There are no official restrictions on passage or service based upon race but some starship operators can be highly racist. This is sometimes due to personal beliefs but often is a form of second-hand racism. Fear that snobbish wealthy individuals might not want to share the VIP lounge with non-Solomani can cause some shipowners to implement racist policies 'just in case'.

Non-Solomani who buy high passage on liners travelling on main routes between Class A and B ports are unlikely to face overt discrimination. The larger shipping lines tend to have policies that require officers and crew to maintain a professional demeanour when dealing with foreigners, ensuring that trade and tourist Credits flow into the Confederation. Operators of small ships tend to be glad to fill their cabins.

Discrimination is more likely on privately owned intermediate lines or single-ship liner companies where the owners have extreme views but even then it is typically of a passive nature. A non-Solomani Traveller might find only middle passage tickets are available for some vaguely described reason. Since high passage ticketholders have more access to the crew and possibly secure parts of the ship, suspicion of outsiders might be another reason why non-Solomani cannot obtain high passage unless accompanied by a high-status pureblood Solomani.

ADDITIONAL SECURITY MEASURES

Generally speaking, normal security systems and a sensible design philosophy are sufficient to protect any vessel. However, some shipyards incorporate additional security features into their designs.

Enhanced Security: Enhanced security is a catch-all term for a package of measures running all through the ship. Some are electronic, such as additional cameras, scanners and locks, and take up little room. However, partitions and fixtures are a little stronger than average, with additional internal security bulkheads. A mix of electronic and mechanical devices are used to prevent 'backdoor' methods being used to bypass the security system.

An enhanced security system takes up 2% of a vessel's hull at a cost of MCr0.2 per ton. It imposes a DM-1 on all attempts to overcome the vessel's security system.

Secure Accommodation: Secure accommodation focuses on staterooms and common areas used by passengers. Stateroom walls and doors are stronger, with a solid bulkhead around the secured area. This is not sufficient to provide protection against ship-to-ship weapons fire but does resist cutting attempts and personal weapons better than standard construction. Enhanced locking devices are also in place, along with improved surveillance equipment. Most systems also include measures such as the ability to dump sedative gas into the secured areas' ventilation system.

A secure accommodation suite consumes space equal to 10% of the tonnage contained within it, at a cost of MCr0.1 per ton. It imposes DM-1 on attempts to defeat the security of the accommodation area, which stacks with the modifier for enhanced security.

ACCOMMODATION VARIANTS

Most Confederation ships use standard staterooms of varying types plus common space to create an acceptable passenger experience but those wishing to impress may install a specialist fitment.

VIP Suite: A VIP suite is intended for the use of a single passenger plus a suitable entourage. It consists of a luxury stateroom plus a private lounge and three other stateroom-equivalent spaces. These can be set up as accommodation, offices, additional working or recreation space, a wine cellar or any other combination of three four-ton chambers. On many ships a steward lives in one of the cabins and is permanently – and exclusively – on-call for the VIP. Some naval vessels have one or more VIP suites as accommodation for the captain or an admiral and ships used by the Secretariat or upper echelons of SolSec typically have several such suites. A VIP suite consumes 28 tons at a cost of MCr2.5. Operators with one or more VIP suites aboard their ship can charge whatever the market will stand for use of one or may offer it at a more reasonable rate as part of a scheme to tempt more high passengers. Typically this takes the form of a sort of lottery – everyone buying a high passage ticket gets a chance to win use of the VIP suite, assigned randomly. A ship doing something like this can sell high passage at the normal rate for four cabins – assuming all are configured for passengers – and gains DM+1 to find high passengers.

High Passage Block: A high passage block is a standardised, self-contained component. It consists of six high staterooms plus a standard cabin (which is usually occupied by a steward or used as a shop or office) plus a generous common space for the exclusive use of the passengers within. All of this is surrounded by a heavy bulkhead and has its own independent life support system. The whole block consumes 60 tons and costs MCr6. It is luxuriously appointed and confers DM+1 to find high passengers.

Steerage Block: Steerage is the lowest form of passage that does not actually involve being frozen. A steerage block consists of tiny sleeping cubicles for up to 24 people plus a small general-purpose 'exercise and recreation' space, a minimal galley and a borderline inadequate set of freshers. The block consumes four tons plus 1.5 tons per person to be accommodated, thus ranging from 5.5 to 40 tons, at a cost of MCr0.1 per ton. Steerage passage is generally equivalent to basic passage as noted in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, but prices can vary considerably. Commonly a middle passage ticket can be exchanged for steerage passage for four people or possibly as many as six if the ship is not full and the passenger is persuasive.

TORPEDO AND MISSILE SYSTEMS

The Confederation Navy makes extensive use of strike forces; light and fast vessels intended to cause maximum harm to enemies for the smallest outlay. In theory, such forces reduce casualties by overwhelming targets before they can do much damage. In practice casualties are high but strike forces represent good value in terms of deterrence and the ability to win the quick victories necessary for success in a war with a major power such as the Imperium.

Torpedo Grapple (TL9): The ability to launch torpedoes from small craft gives them effective striking power against larger vessels, albeit at horrific risk. Torpedoes are normally launched from barbettes, which take up two firmpoints and hold two torpedoes. 75-ton strike boats exist, which carry a laser plus a torpedo barbette but it is difficult to mount torpedoes on smaller craft.

Similarly, it is considered desirable to be able to convert civilian starships into torpedo craft for use as Q-ships. Such vessels have the capability to deliver a sucker punch to any opponent that gets too close. This can be used for deterrence or sneak attacks, depending on whether the presence of the weapons is advertised. A vessel equipped in this manner, albeit not in Confederation hands, came close to crippling the Imperial Navy heavy cruiser INS Dusagara in 1079. The initial close-range torpedo salvo swamped the cruiser's point defences and destroyed her bridge, although the attack was ultimately unsuccessful.

The key to this capability is an external torpedo grapple, which comes in two variants – one for small craft and one for starships.

Torpedo Grapple, Firmpoint: This device takes up a single firmpoint and carries two torpedoes on a non-reloadable mount. Both can be launched together or a single weapon can be delivered. The grapple itself does not affect streamlining but a ship with torpedoes in place can only be considered at best partially streamlined. Any kind of torpedo can be carried on a grapple. A firmpoint grapple costs MCr0.1 and does not need to be replaced after use but cannot be reloaded in flight. Torpedoes must be purchased at standard prices – Cr150000 per standard torpedo and more for specialist types.

Torpedo Grapple, Hardpoint: A larger torpedo grapple can be mounted on a single hardpoint, carrying four torpedoes on a non-reloadable mount. A grapple with torpedoes aboard reduces streamlined ships to a partially streamlined state. Torpedoes can be launched singly or in pairs. The mount costs MCr0.25 and, like the firmpoint grapple, consumes negligible space inside the ship.

Missile Container/Launcher (TL9): Instead of reloadable turret-mounted launchers, missiles can be carried in a firmpoint or hardpoint-mounted container/launcher. This is a disposable lightweight box containing all the connections and support systems required to maintain a missile in ready-to-fire condition. Container-launchers can be purchased in single, dual or quad configurations, all of which consume a single hardpoint. A single or dual container-launcher can be mounted on a firmpoint. Missiles can be launched in any combination, creating a 'surge' capability that can overwhelm the defences of a major warship. Cost is MCr0.5 plus MCr0.1 per missile to be carried. Missiles can be replaced at the cost of the weapon plus MCr0.1.

Heavy Missile (TL12): Missiles are normally launched from a turret, barbette or bay but larger weapons are available as one-shot container/launchers. These may be embedded in the hull of ship or carried externally; either way reloading the weapon must take place in a port, hangar or base. Heavy missiles are referred to as 'one-shot ship killers' although they are unlikely to destroy a large vessel. A heavy missile container/launcher consumes two hardpoints plus five tons inside the ship. It can carry a single heavy missile. Installation costs MCr2; reloading costs MCr0.25 plus the price of the missile.

Combination Missile/Torpedo Launcher: The Confederation Navy has been trying for years to create an effective launching system that can take missiles or torpedoes as required. This turret-sized system is as close as it has come to a workable design, although it is clumsy and prone to loading failures. A combination launcher fits in a standard turret mount – single, dual or triple – but can only have one type of ammunition ready in each tube. It takes one round to remove ordnance and send it back to the magazine and one round to load a new weapon into the launcher. For this reason, combination launchers are often carried empty and loaded at the beginning of an engagement when it begins to become clear what ordnance will be needed.

A combination launcher needs dedicated magazine space. One ton of magazine space holds three torpedoes or 12 missiles, so a triple turret with two tons of magazine space could carry one torpedo reload for all three tubes plus four missile reloads for all three. Ordnance can be mixed in a magazine; a one-ton magazine could hold two torpedoes and four missiles. Apart from the possibility of an ammunition hoist failure, the system's other drawback is that it uses non-standard ordnance. Torpedoes and missiles cost 25% more than standard and will not fit in a standard launcher. Likewise, standard weapons will not fit in a combination launch system. A combination launch system costs MCr2 and uses no power. It takes up one ton in addition to the normal turret allocation, plus magazine space.

Heavy Missile

Weapon	TL	Thrust	Damage	Cost	Traits
Advanced	15	15	12D	MCr1.5	Smart
Long-Range	12	15	6D	MCr1	Smart
Nuclear	12	15	15D	MCr2.5	Radiation, Smart
Standard	12	10	8D	MCr0.75	Smart

UB-25 SMALL UTILITY BOAT

TL14		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	25 tons, Streamlined	—	1.5
M-Drive	Thrust 4	1	2
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 30	2	2
Fuel Tanks	4 weeks of operation	0.2	—
Bridge	Dual Cockpit	2.5	0.15
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Firmpoint Grapple (standard torpedo x2)	—	0.4
Systems			—
Staterooms	Acceleration Seats x12	6	0.18
	Cabin Space x4	6	0.4
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
Cargo		6.3	—

TOTAL: MCr 9.79

CREW

PILOT

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr816/month

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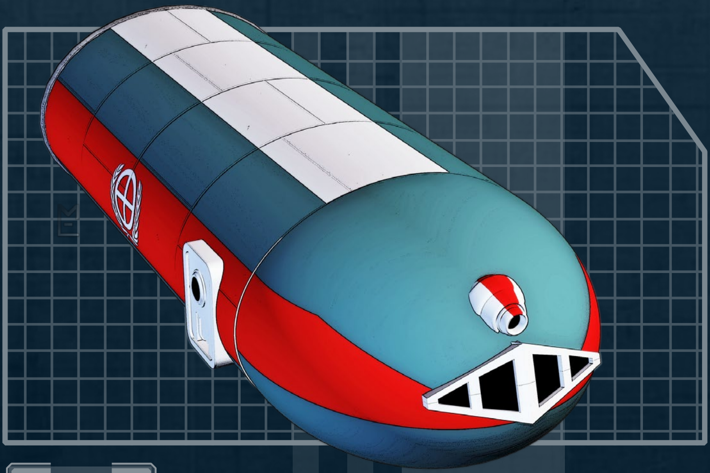
PURCHASE COST
MCr9.79

POWER REQUIREMENTS

10	5	—
MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	FUEL PROCESSOR
—	1	—
JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS



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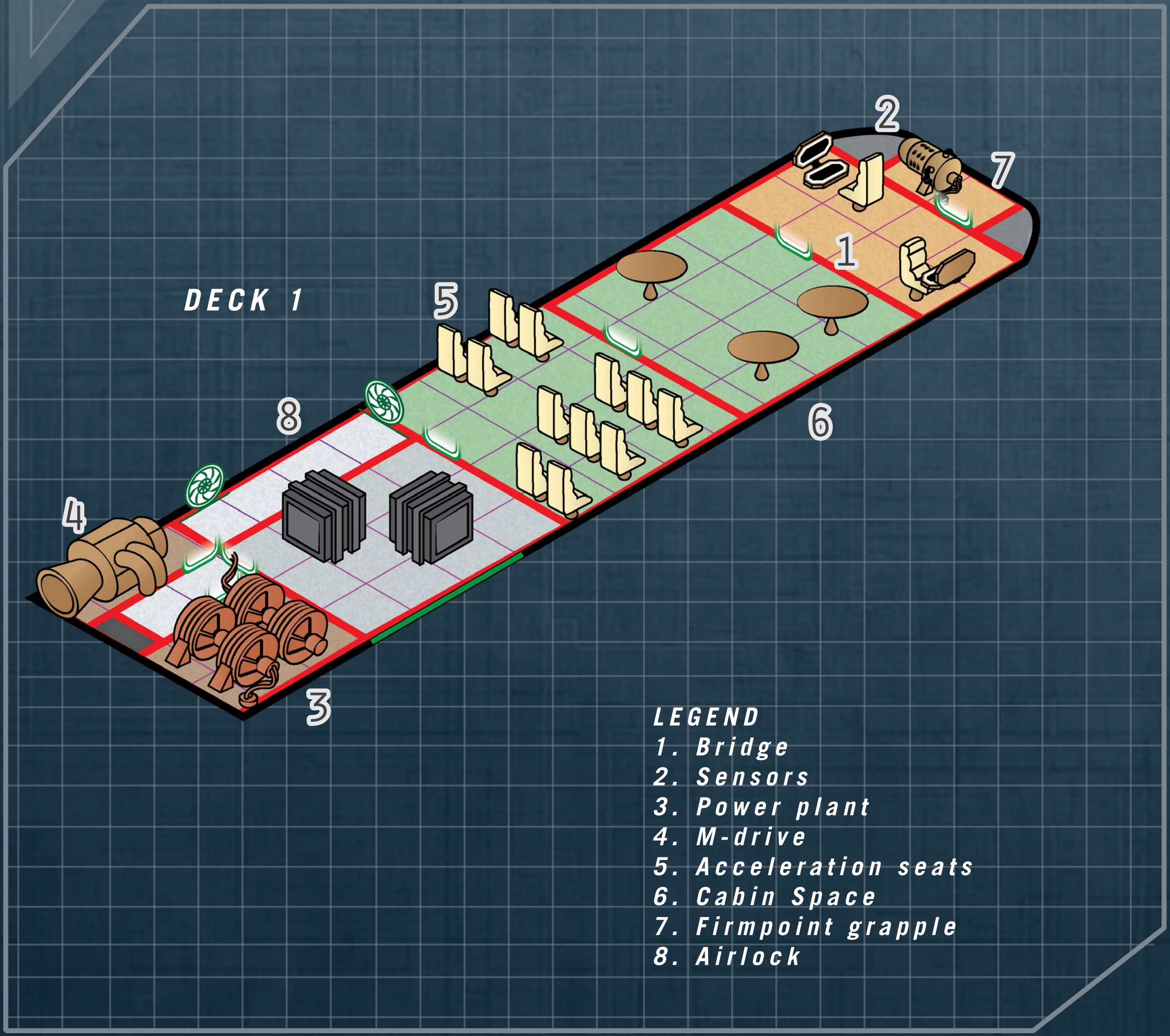
HULL POINTS

The worlds of the Solomani Confederation make use of a variety of small craft. Many are built to standard Imperial designs, although often with a local designation and claims that the craft was in fact a Solomani invention. In addition, the Confederation Navy and many member governments use uniquely 'Solomani' craft, which are rarely encountered elsewhere. These are typically built on a 'small 25/large 75' system that matches standardised small craft bays.

By way of example, the standard light fighter used by the Confederation's military forces is a 25-ton vessel, with assault shuttles and strike boats built on a 75-ton hull. The civilian equivalent is the UB (Utility Boat) 25/75. These craft are ubiquitous at starports, fulfilling a variety of roles. Some member governments arm UB-25s with a laser or missile launcher and use them for short-range security patrols.



The UB-25 is built on a flattened cylinder design, conventionally laid out with drives and power plant aft and the cockpit forward. The space in between is normally split between cargo and passenger spaces, with an emphasis on passengers. Typically, larger craft carry cargo to orbit whilst the small boats move a few incidentals along with anyone travelling between downport and highport. Boats that have cargo moving in and out on a constant basis tend to be more dinged and generally worn-looking than light-traffic craft, so segregating cargo and personnel movements allows the passenger transports to be more easily maintained in presentable condition. However, smaller installations cannot be so choosy.

The Port Authority variant has the same general capabilities as most others. It is relatively quick and has an excess of power. This permits additional systems to be added in the cargo space, creating sub-variants within the type. Twelve passengers can be accommodated in reasonable comfort, although seats are often removed on 'working' boats to make room for tools, rescue equipment or whatever else the craft is required to carry. A torpedo grapple is often fitted, although weapons are not usually shipped during routine operations. At need, however, a utility boat can serve as a security vessel or a group of them might make a last-ditch attempt to stop an attack on the port.

UB-75 LARGE UTILITY BOAT

TL14		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	75 tons, Streamlined	—	4.5
M-Drive	Thrust 4	3	6
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 45	3	3
Fuel Tanks	4 weeks of operation	0.3	—
Bridge		6	0.5
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Single Turret (pulse laser)	1	1.2
	Firmpoint Dual Container/ Launchers x2	0	1.7
Staterooms	Acceleration Benches x2	2	0.02
	Cabin Space	6	0.3
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
Cargo		52.7	—

TOTAL: MCr 20.38

CREW

PILOT

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr1698/month

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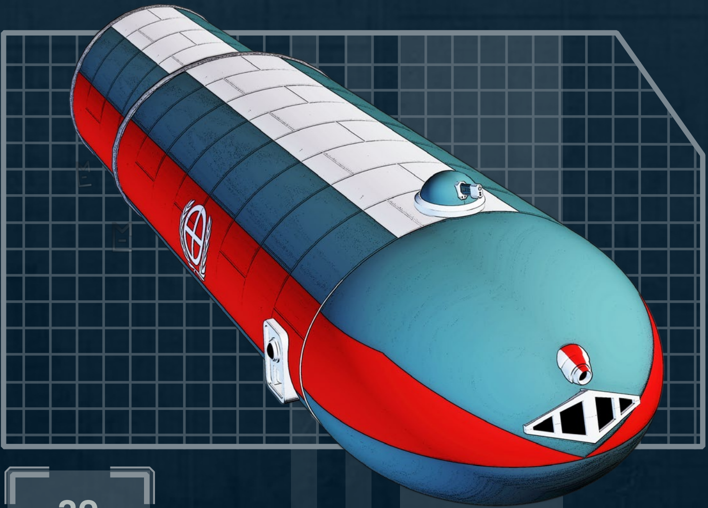
PURCHASE COST
MCr20.38

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	FUEL PROCESSOR
30	15	—

JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS
—	1	4



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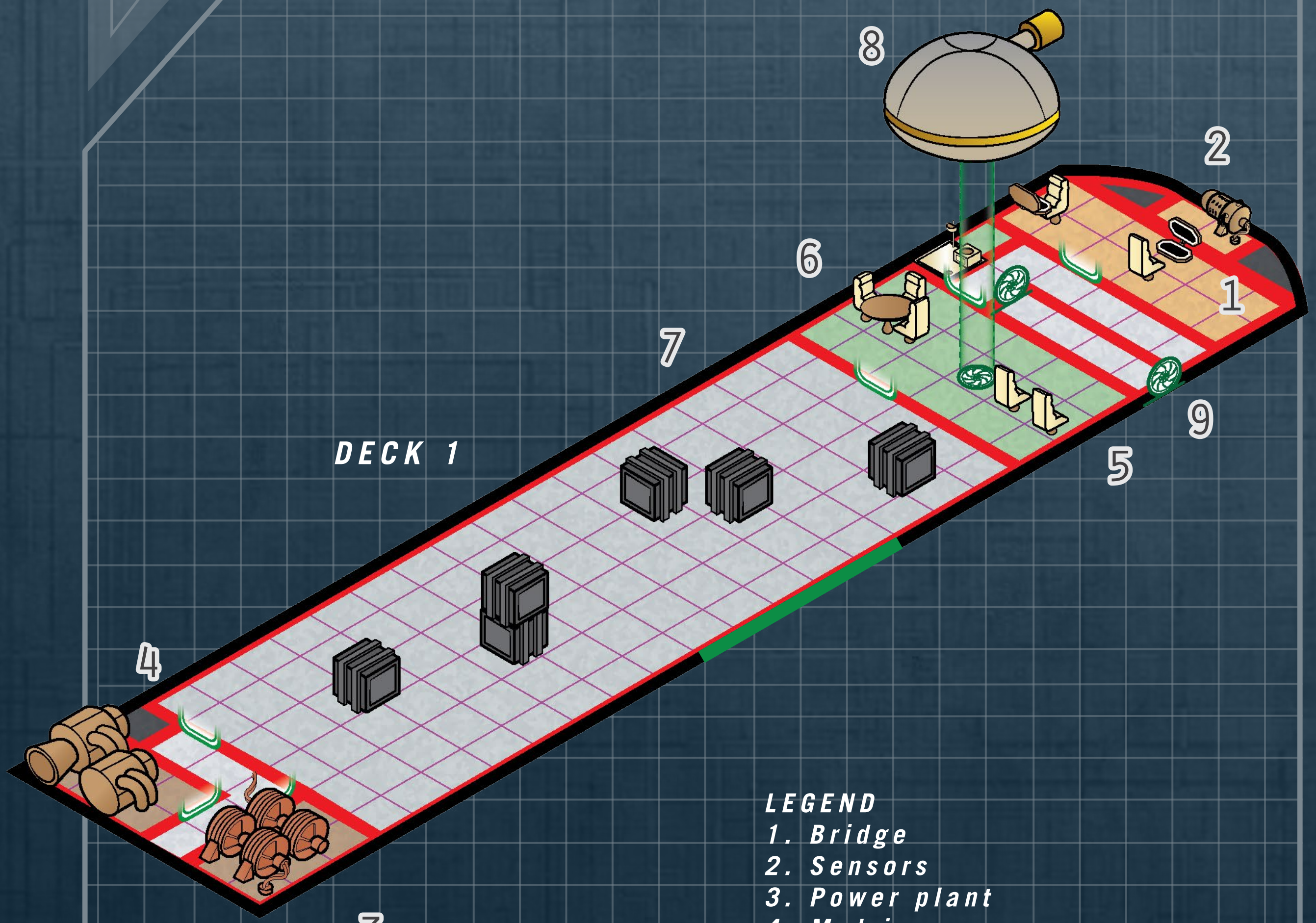
HULL POINTS

The UB-75 is built on the same flattened-cylinder hull design as its smaller cousin and is similar in performance. It is normally set up as a cargo shuttle with space for a handful or rather cramped passengers. The vessel can be run by a single pilot but normally carries a technician/co-pilot for shuttle duty. When running other errands, the UB-75 may gain additional personnel. In this configuration the cabin space is used by the crew as a working area.



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. Acceleration seats
6. Cabin Space
7. Cargo hold
8. Single turret
9. Airlock

The UB-75 carries a laser turret as standard and is a popular low-cost security vessel. Standardisation allows a cash-strapped Port Authority to simplify maintenance and transfer unused weapons to other craft. A pair of container/launchers for standard missiles are included in the buying price. Some purchasers omit these but there are advantages to taking them. Apart from the fact that they might someday be needed, the launchers contribute towards ticking some of the boxes for Home Forces' mandatory capabilities without the need to purchase expensive system defence boats.

Operators routinely practice a standard manoeuvre whereby massed utility boats slave their launchers to a warship's guidance system and deliver a salvo of missiles before scattering and running for cover. In theory the missile-armed craft should be able to escape whilst the 'proper' system defence boats engage the enemy but the tactic has never been tried in a major conflict.

USC-3A SMALL PACKET BOAT (SOLOMANI COURIER)

TL12		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	100 tons, Standard	—	5
	Enhanced Security	2	0.4
M-Drive	Thrust 3 (energy efficient)	3	6.6
Jump Drive	Jump 3	12.5	18.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 90	6	6
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 4 weeks of operation	30.6	0
Bridge	Holographic Controls	10	0.625
Computer	Computer/20	0	5
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Dual Turret (pulse lasers)	1	2.5
Staterooms	Standard x3	12	1.5
Common Area		4	0.8
Software	Manoeuvre/0	0	0
	Jump Control/3	0	0.3
	Library	0	0
Cargo		16	0

TOTAL: MCr 51.575

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEER, GUNNER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr4297.92/month

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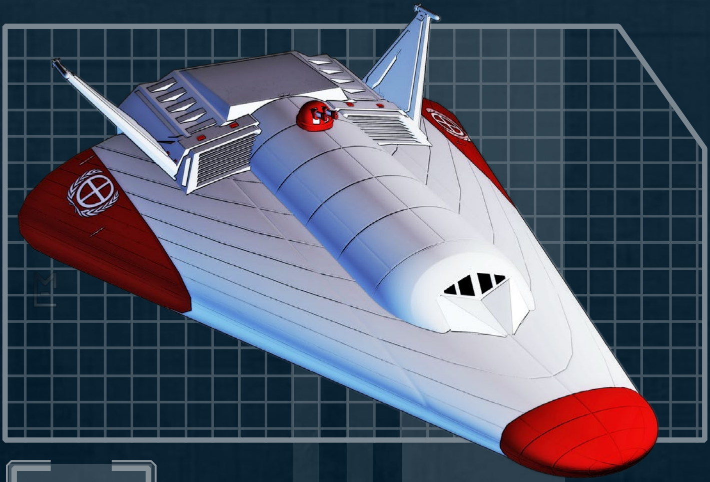
PURCHASE COST
MCr51.575

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	FUEL PROCESSOR
23	20	—

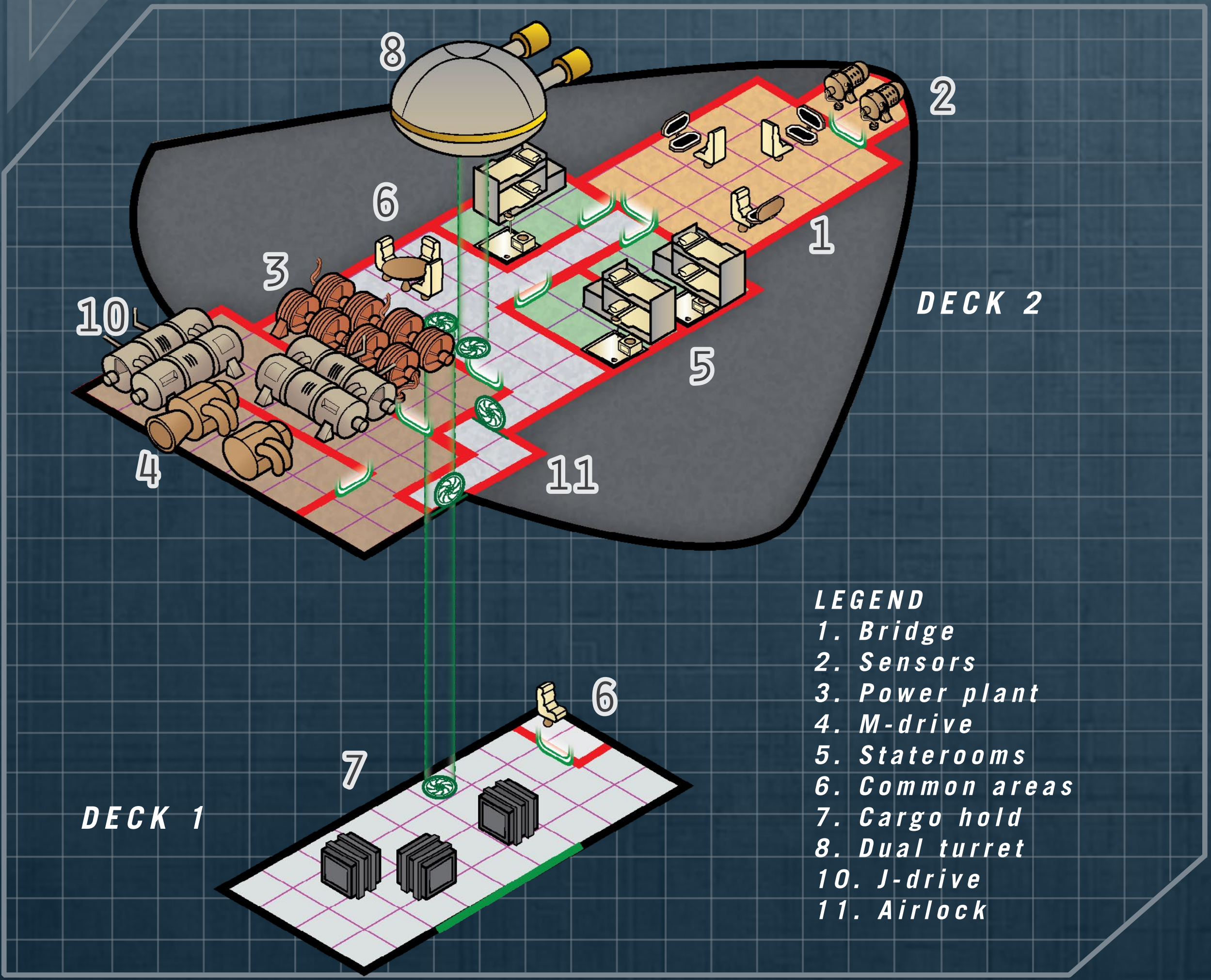
JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS
30	2	9



40
HULL POINTS

The SC series of small packet boats has its origins in a programme to replace both the x-boat system and the ubiquitous Type S scout/courier in the Solomani Autonomous Region. The 'SC' designation started out as a placeholder indicating the design's name would be approved by the Solomani Party at an appropriate time in the future. To date this has not happened and variants are simply identified by a number/letter combination.

All variants of the SC-type use a similar hull form, an elegant rounded wedge reminiscent of but different from the angular Imperial equivalent. Most are built at TL12, allowing them to be produced at shipyards across the Confederation. Jump-3 capability is standard, although the basic design of the hull is sometimes used for different ships whose performance is usually lower.



The standard SC-3 is essentially a jump-3 drive and fuel tanks with a bridge attached. Between them lies crew accommodation, consisting of three staterooms with a common area where a fourth might lie. Slightly greater space is created by not having a partition between the common area and main access corridor. This can lead to incidents where a crewmember moving quickly encounters spill over from the recreation area.

The hull has a deep belly, creating a small lower deck taken up entirely by the cargo area. In the standard SC-3A this is a simple hold but the 3C variant includes a mail distribution system, which takes up 10 tons of this area and adds MCr20 to purchase price of the ship. Mountings are installed as standard, allowing a 3A to be converted to a 3C in a matter of hours. The SC-3B variant fits a steerage passenger block capable of holding transporting six people into the cargo area, using the rest of the space for baggage and a tiny common area. This adds MCr2.6 to the purchase price of the ship. Such vessels transport people, small packages and information between the ports of the Confederation in rapid but wearying discomfort.

Apart from drive performance, the only luxuries aboard an SC-3 are the computer and sensor fit. These allow the vessel to carry out a variety of roles, making it unnecessary to build multiple ships but pushing individual costs up. Some clients request a reduced sensor and computer fit, reducing cost by MCr3. It is an open secret that many SC-3s are operated by SolSec, making use of the vessel's good sensor and processing capability to obtain intelligence whilst posing as a normal courier.

The SC-3 is a bare-bones utilitarian design in most ways. However, it is not cheap. The choice of three parsec jump range makes the SC-3 far more expensive than an Imperial Scout/Courier, which is also available in Solomani Confederation space.

THALASSA SMALL TRANSPORT

TL12		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	400 tons, Standard	—	20
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient)	8	17.6
Jump Drive	Jump 1 (energy efficient)	15	24.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 225	15	15
Fuel Tanks	J-1, 4 weeks of operation	42	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	2.5
Computer	Computer/15	—	2
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers, sandcaster) x2	2	6.5
Systems	Fuel/Cargo Module (42 tons)	44.1	0.2205
	Cargo Crane	3	3
	cc (steerage blocks)	8	0.8
Staterooms	Standard x20	80	10
	Steerage Block (capacity 24) x2	80	8
Common Area		16	1.6
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/1	—	0.1
	Library	—	—
Cargo		66	—

TOTAL: MCr 115.0705

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X2, STEWARD, GUNNERS X2, MEDIC

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr9589/month

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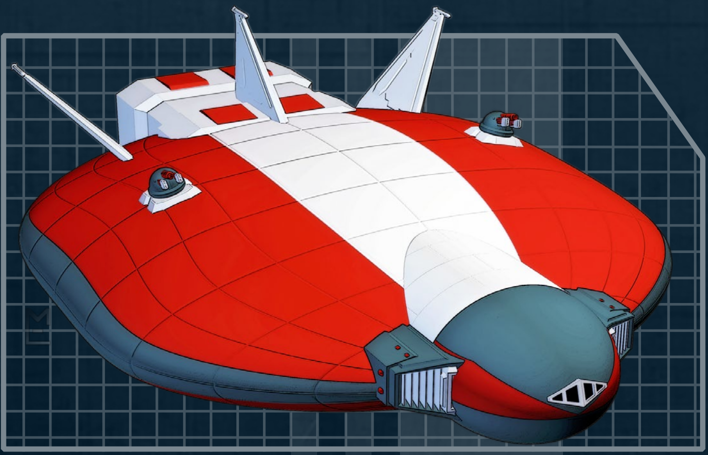
PURCHASE COST
MCr115.0705

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	FUEL PROCESSOR
60	80	—

JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS
30	1	18



120
HULL POINTS

The *Thalassa*-class is a standard small transport and passenger ship in use throughout the Confederation but quite rare outside it. Imperial databases designate it Type SA, which translates roughly as 'Solomani equivalent to the Type A free trader'. This designation is reasonably accurate when referring to some variants of the class but others are sufficiently different that they need to be classified differently. Most ships are named after seas, with the concept interpreted creatively. Thus there are vessels named for rivers, lakes and even ponds, and also 'seas' of the Lunar sort.

Hull form is a dome shape with projections fore and aft on the centreline. This does lead to the possibly unkind nickname of 'Space Tortoises', which also makes fun of the vessel's low jump capability. However, the Thalassa is a very flexible design. Its dedicated fuel tankage is sufficient for one jump-1 and four weeks of operation but if it is necessary to cross to a different main or cluster – or just to have fuel in reserve for a quick getaway – the fuel/cargo module can be filled. This provides for another jump and around five weeks of additional operating time. The module can carry fuel or cargo; it must be used for one or the other although it can be only partially filled. In normal operation this module provides 42 tons of additional cargo space.

The central 'strip' of the hull is two decks high. On the top deck are the bridge and drive spaces, with eight crew cabins and a four ton common area between. The lower deck of the central strip houses 12 passenger cabins plus 12 tons of common space towards its fore end. The twin steerage blocks lie aft and along the flanks of the passenger area, with access heavily restricted. The remainder of the domed part of the hull is given over to cargo space and the fuel/cargo module.

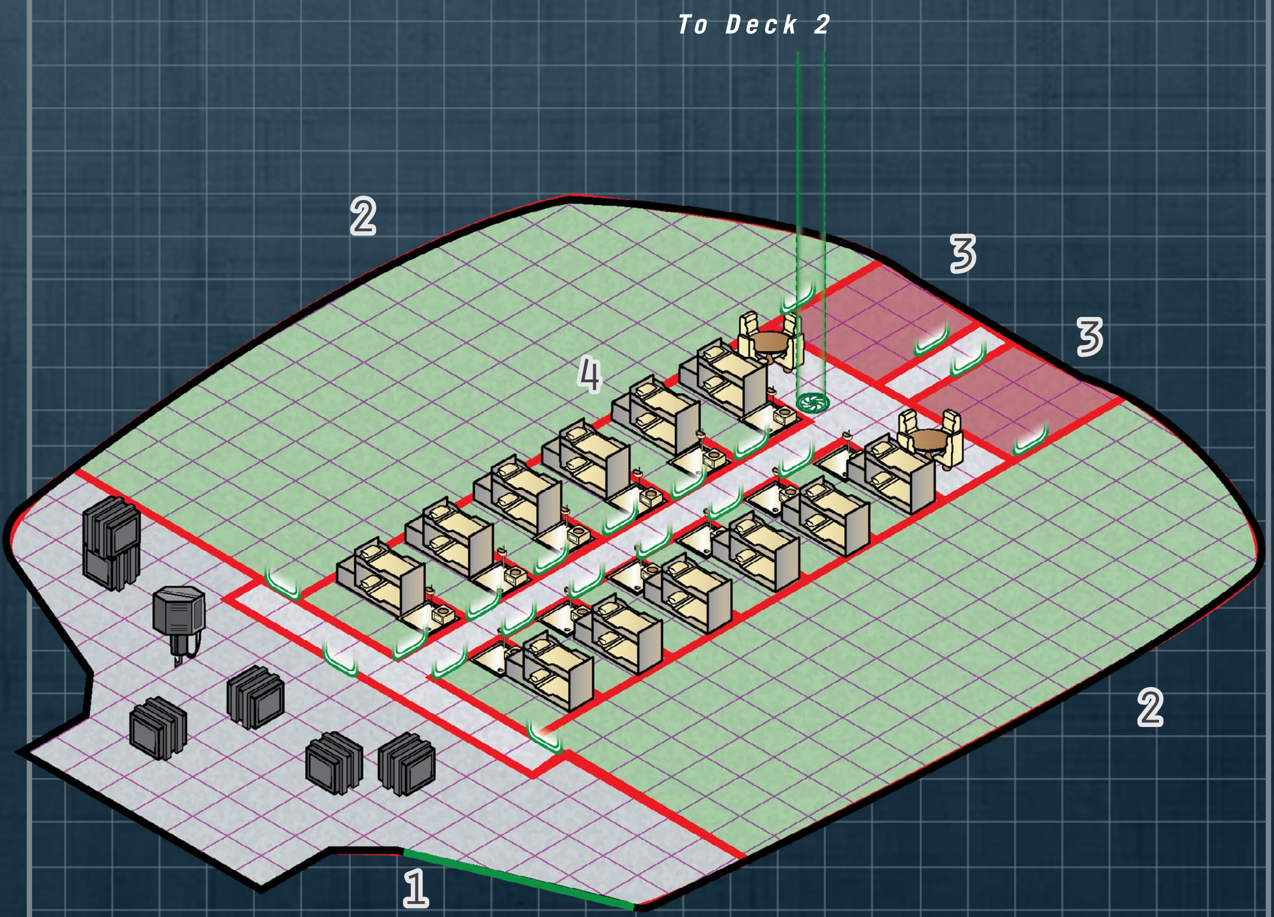
The *Thalassa*-class is normally delivered with two standard defence turrets, mounting a pair of pulse lasers and a sandcaster, with all weapons mounted on the dorsal surface of the vessel.

Thalassas can be fitted out in a variety of configurations. Some lack the fuel/cargo module, gaining 44 tons of dedicated cargo space and others delete the steerage blocks to gain 88 tons of cargo capacity. The lower-deck passenger space can also be fitted out as cargo hold for an additional 60 tons. One or both steerage modules can also be replaced with a bulk low-berth chamber containing 72 low berths and a medical bay. Power for this facility is factored into the vessel's power plant design.

A *Thalassa* small transport that retains the fuel/cargo option and can therefore go almost anywhere in the Confederation – eventually – will thus typically be encountered in one of the following configurations:

Configuration	High/Mid Passenger Cabins	Steerage Passengers	Cargo with Jump-1	Cargo with Jump-1 x2	Low Berths
Bulk Passenger	12	48	106	64	0
Freightliner	12	0	194	152	0
Bulk Cargo	0	0	254	212	0
Low Passenger	12	0	106	64	144
Low/Bulk Passenger	12	24	106	64	72

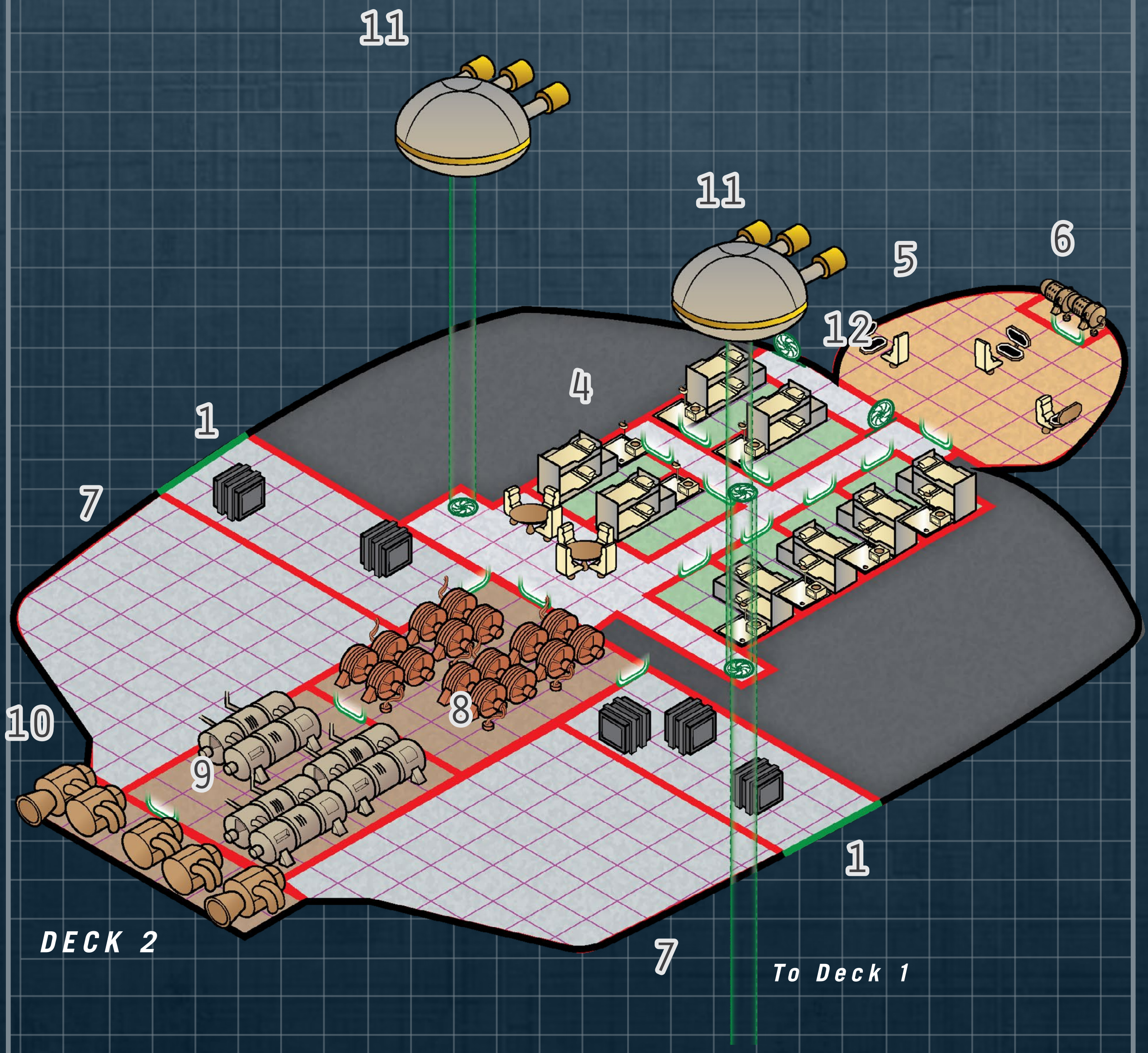
Other variants may have considerably different capabilities. The modular nature of the compartments allows one area to be repurposed without affecting others. Thus those travelling aboard on a supposed bulk passenger variant might be unaware that one of the steerage blocks in fact houses an intelligence-gathering team. One common aftermarket conversion is to remove the passenger accommodation and replace it with equipment for prospecting or small-scale mining. It is thus not wise to make assumptions about a Space Tortoise.


To Deck 2
2
3
3
4
2
1

DECK 1

LEGEND

1. Cargo hold
2. Steerage blocks
3. Secure accommodation
4. Staterooms


11
11
5
6
12
4
1
7
10
8
9
1
DECK 2
7
To Deck 1

LEGEND
5. Bridge
6. Sensors
7. Cargo modules
8. Power plant
9. J-drive
10. M-drive
11. Triple turrets
12. Airlock

SAXBY SYSTEM DEFENCE BOAT

TL12		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	600 tons, Standard	—	30
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	57.6	28.8
M-Drive	Thrust 7 (energy efficient x2)	42	105
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 1,125	42	42
Fuel Tanks	8 weeks of operation	16.8	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	3.75
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
Weapons	Heavy Missile Container/Launchers x2	10	5.5
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers, sandcaster) x2	2	6.5
Screens	Nuclear Dampers x2	20	20
Craft	Full Hangar (100 tons)	200	40
Armoured Bulkheads	Power Plant, Manoeuvre Drive, Bridge	13.7	2.74
Systems	Medical Bay	4	2
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
	UNREP System (20 tons/hour)	1	0.5
	Repair Drones	6	1.2
Staterooms	Standard x 24	96	12
Common Area		32	3.2
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Advanced Fire Control/1	—	12
	Anti-Hijack/1	—	6
	Virtual Gunner/1	—	10
Cargo		29.5	—

TOTAL: MCr 344.49

CREW

CCAPTAIN, PILOT, ENGINEERS X4, MEDIC, GUNNERS X6 CRAFT PILOTS AS NEEDED

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr28707.5/month

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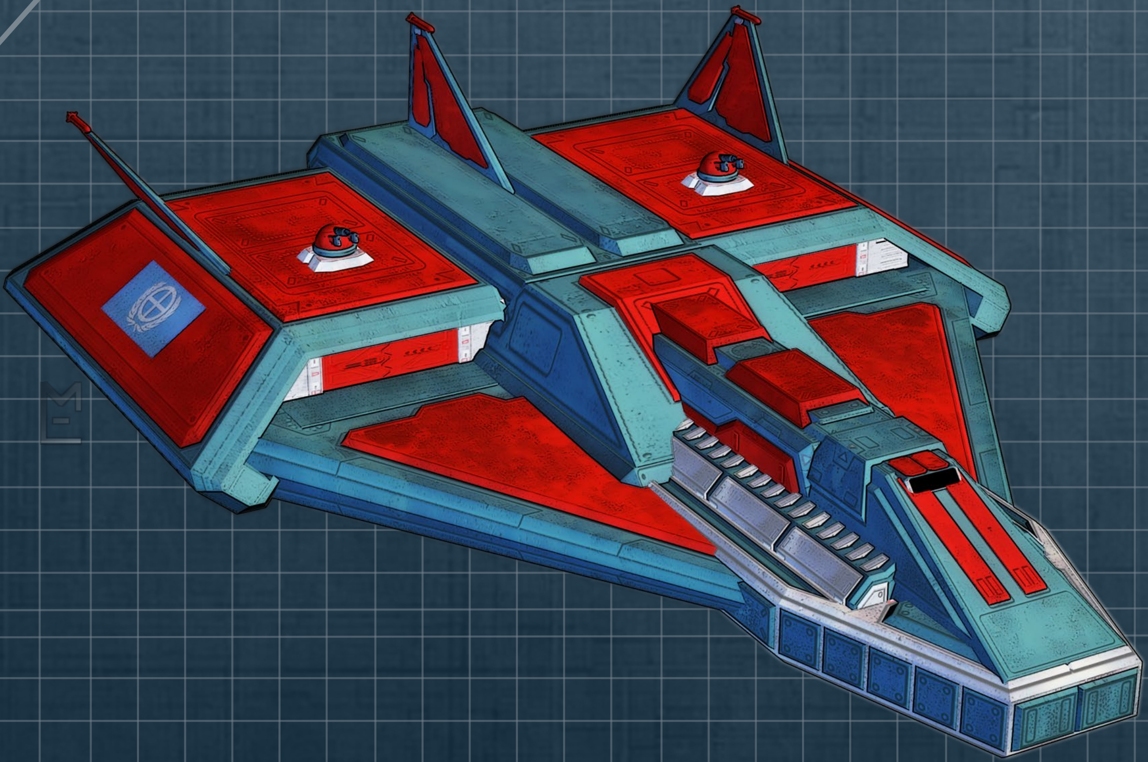
PURCHASE COST
MCr344.49

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	420
BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	120
FUEL PROCESSOR	—
SYSTEMS	2
SENSORS	4
WEAPONS	58
HULL POINTS	240

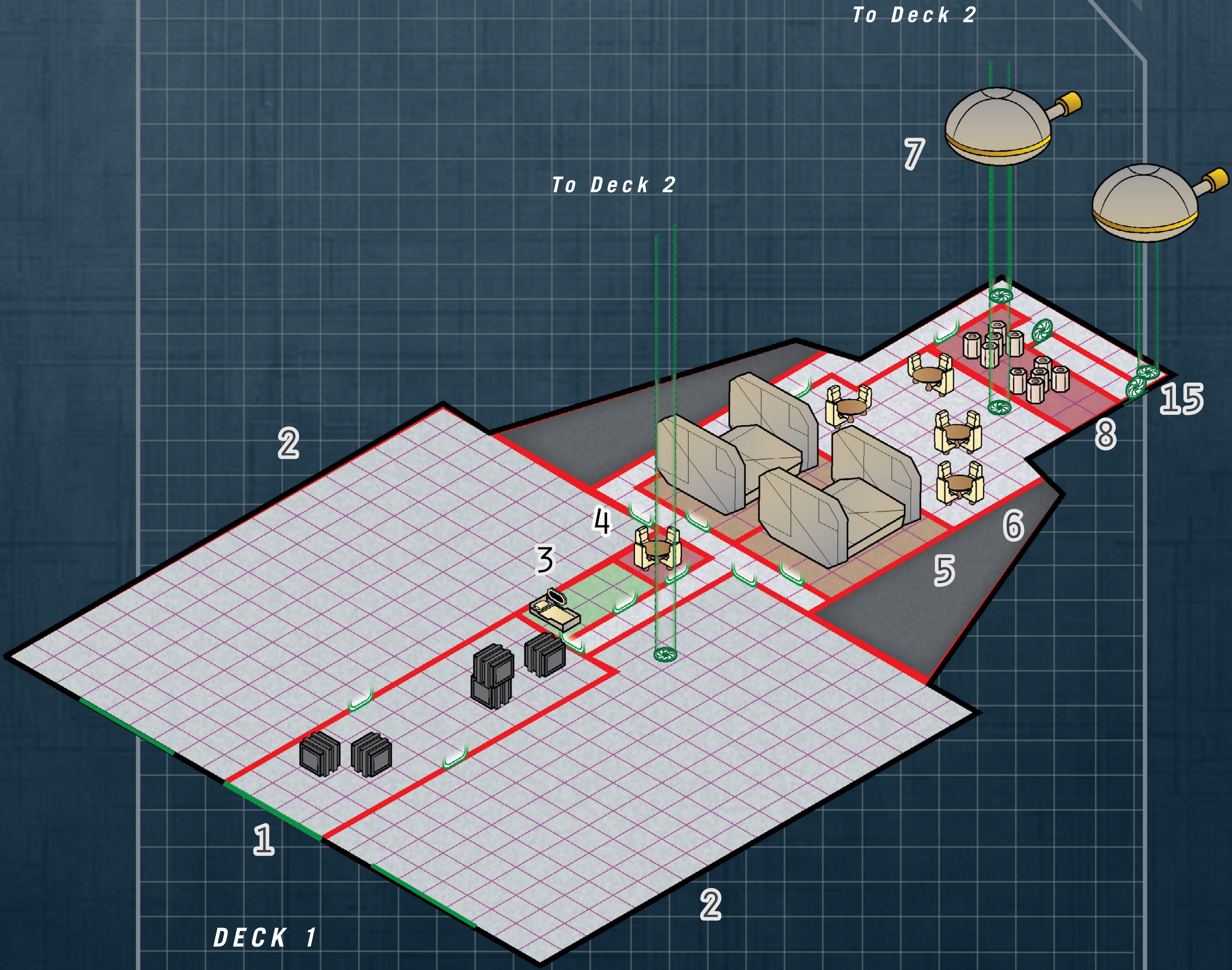


The *Saxby* class is named for districts of cities on the owning world, although many simply receive number designations instead. The class is designed around the capability to deliver a pair of 'one-shot ship-killer' heavy missiles, which are carried in external container/launchers. Secondary armament is adequate for patrol work but these boats are designed to attack en masse, ideally screened by fighters, then flee to a base for re-arming.

Hull form is a 'staggered wedge', narrow at the fore end of the ship where the bridge is located. The main hull section containing living spaces and most general machinery, is wider, whilst the aft segment is wider still. This houses the drives near the centreline with two 50-ton-capacity hangars on each side. The addition of the hangars is controversial but in order to create a craft large enough to carry a pair of heavy missiles a 600-ton hull was required. Even with the addition of heavy armour it was possible to provide for long-duration patrols, especially if the 'upgrade tonnage' is set up as additional crew recreation spaces.

Thus a fully equipped *Saxby* can carry a flight of four 25-ton light fighters or two fighters and two utility boats. This permits a force to deploy its own fighter screen, which can be useful but is more commonly used to create a patrol vessel with greater endurance. If half of each hangar is converted into additional living space, fuel tanks and stowage a *Saxby* can make long outsystem patrols carrying a pair of utility boats and a boarding party to crew them. When used in this role the heavy anti-ship missiles are sometimes left at base and overall this is not an efficient use of the vessel. However, the theory goes that in peacetime *Saxbys* can assist with system patrol and if war threatens they can be concentrated into strike squadrons.

The missile container-launchers are carried on the flanks, ahead of the widest section of the hull, whilst the two laser/defence turrets are mounted dorsal and ventral on the main hull.


To Deck 2
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To Deck 2
2
15
8
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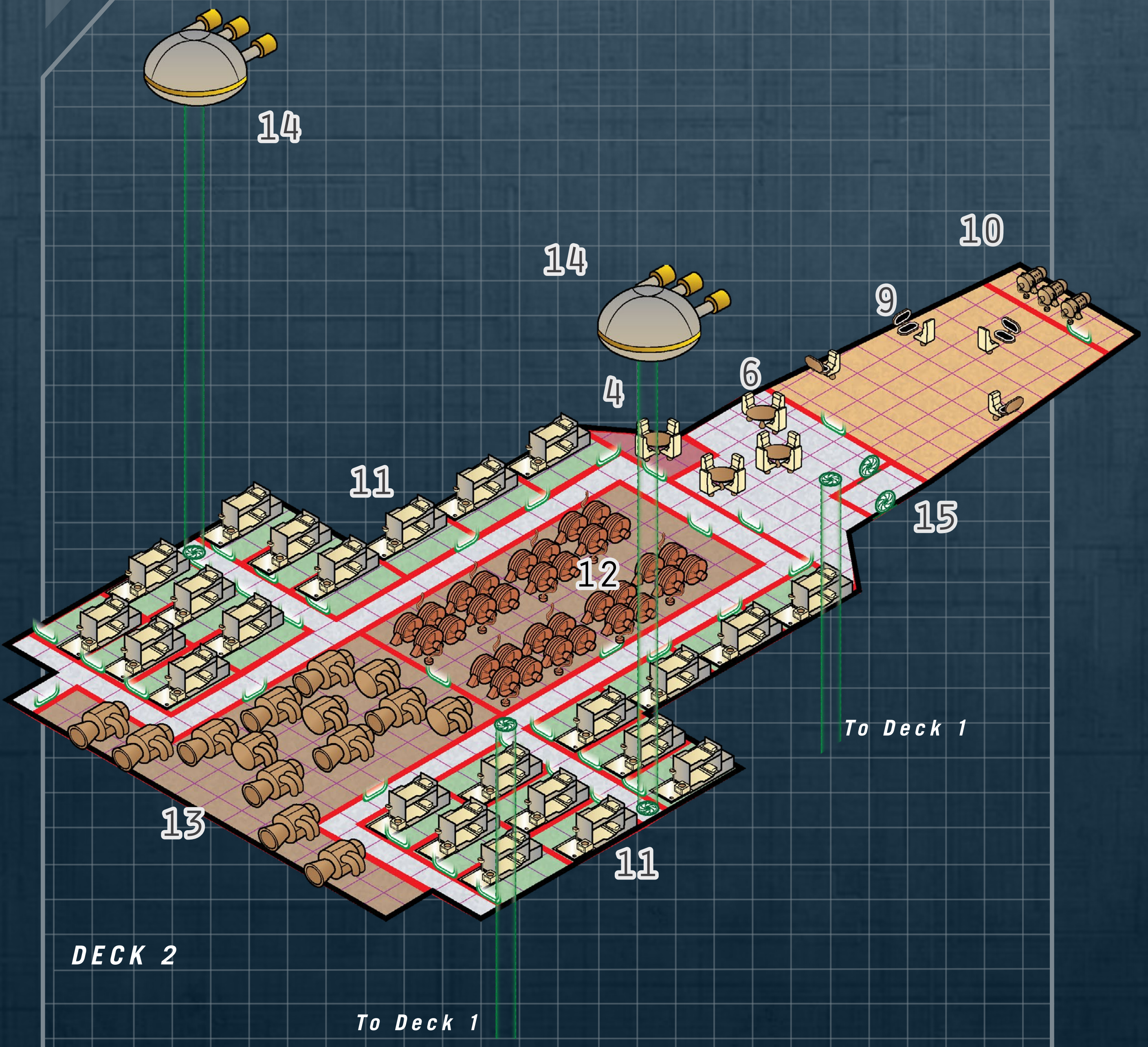
1
2
DECK 1

LEGEND

1. Cargo hold
2. Hangers
3. Med bay
4. Countermeasures suites
5. Nuclear dampers
6. Common areas
7. Missile launchers
8. Repair drones


14
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12
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To Deck 1
13
11
DECK 2
To Deck 1

LEGEND

9. Bridge
10. Sensors
11. Staterooms
12. Power plant
13. M-drive
14. Triple turrets
15. Airlocks

SOLOMANI

The people of the Solomani Confederation share an identical body type and a great deal of common history with those of the Imperium. Not surprisingly, much of the equipment in use in the Confederation is functionally similar to the Imperial equivalent. There does tend to be more design variation in Solomani items but differences between devices intended to fulfil the same function are mostly cosmetic. Most items are compatible with Imperial standards, allowing cross-border exports or use of equipment obtained from the Imperium by whatever means.

Military equipment is produced at TL12–14 for the most part. TL12 is widely available, allowing local maintenance and cheaper purchases, so tends to be used by Home Forces units and some elements of the Confederation armed forces. Equipment for the Confederation Navy are almost universally built at TL14, with many Home Forces units constructed at TL12. A handful of Confederation worlds, although still officially rated at TL14, can produce limited amounts of TL15 equipment and a handful of TL15 designs have begun to appear. These are prototypes and early-production vessels using mostly TL14 components. Similar, a few TL15 consumer and military items are becoming available but these are hard to find on the open market.

CURRENCY

The Solomani Confederation uses a similar monetary and banking system to the Imperium. Its currency has the same name but is slightly different in design. The Imperial Credit is usually accepted within the Confederation but there are some places where it will be rejected on general principle. Conversion between the two is easy at most major starports, although sometimes tariffs are placed on Imperial money.

The Confederation Credit is used throughout the Confederation and generally referred to as see-see, or just a Credit. Small transactions can be done in cash using coins, notes and high-value plaques, which contain micro-circuitry to prevent counterfeiting. Many worlds produce their own Credits, subject to strict rules about the amounts they can create. As a result there are many designs of see-see. Most celebrate triumphs in the long heritage of the Solomani people, or feature notable individuals.

Collectors will pay very well for small-run notes and coins that have long ago passed out of circulation and occasionally counterfeit 'old money' appears. The slang term for a bogus note is a 'Boney' or 'Boneyphony' after a notorious scam in which a stash of ancient currency allegedly produced during the reign of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of Old Earth flooded the low-end collector markets. A surprisingly large number of people fell for this caper, although it was short-lived.

PERSONAL WEAPONS AND MILITARY SMALL ARMS

Personal weaponry is much the same in the Confederation as elsewhere, although there are preferences for different weapons.

A03/48956

OFFICER'S REVOLVER, CONFEDERATION NAVY

The Confederation Navy does not expect its officers to get involved in gunfights. Sidearms are a badge of rank and perhaps the last chance at self-defence in a desperate situation. The standard-issue officer's handgun is a beautifully decorated 8mm revolver holding six rounds. Its slim lines emphasise its long barrel and overall elegance. These guns are not very effective in combat but are manufactured to extremely high standards and are very 'pointable'. Typically made for a specific officer, a navy revolver gives DM+1 on aimed fire but only when used by the person it was made for.

Navy revolvers are grossly overpriced but well-off officers often choose to have an even better one handmade. Prices in the tens of thousands of Credits are commonplace. These weapons are worn for show and may not even be loaded under safe conditions. An officer expecting to be in a fight would normally arm himself with a 'proper' gun from the armoury, or – better – a squad of naval infantry.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Officer's Revolver	12	25	3D-2	1.2	Cr1600	6	Cr10	—

A03/75674

OFFICER'S SWORD, CONFEDERATION ARMED FORCES

Naval officers are issued a dress sword and will often commission one of their own as they rise in rank. Swords are modelled on the traditional smallsword or spadroon, and may or may not have a cutting edge. The point is always lethally sharp, however. The army favours an infantry sabre as its dress weapon; a shorter and lighter version of the traditional cavalry sabre. However, senior officers typically wear straight dress swords of the smallsword type. SolSec officials do not normally wear swords, but may carry a weapon similar to the naval officer's sword for formal occasions that require it

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Officers' Sword	12	Melee	2D+2	0.8	Cr750	—	—	—
Officer's Sword	12	Melee	3D-2	1	Cr500	—	—	—

Military Issue Weapons

The Confederation Navy uses a standard semi-automatic pistol as a sidearm for its personnel when on security duty or whenever a weapon of self-defence might be needed. Snub pistols and carbines are issued for most shipboard situations – again, these are conventional. For security and combat operations in situations where low gravity is not a factor, a combat shotgun is favoured.

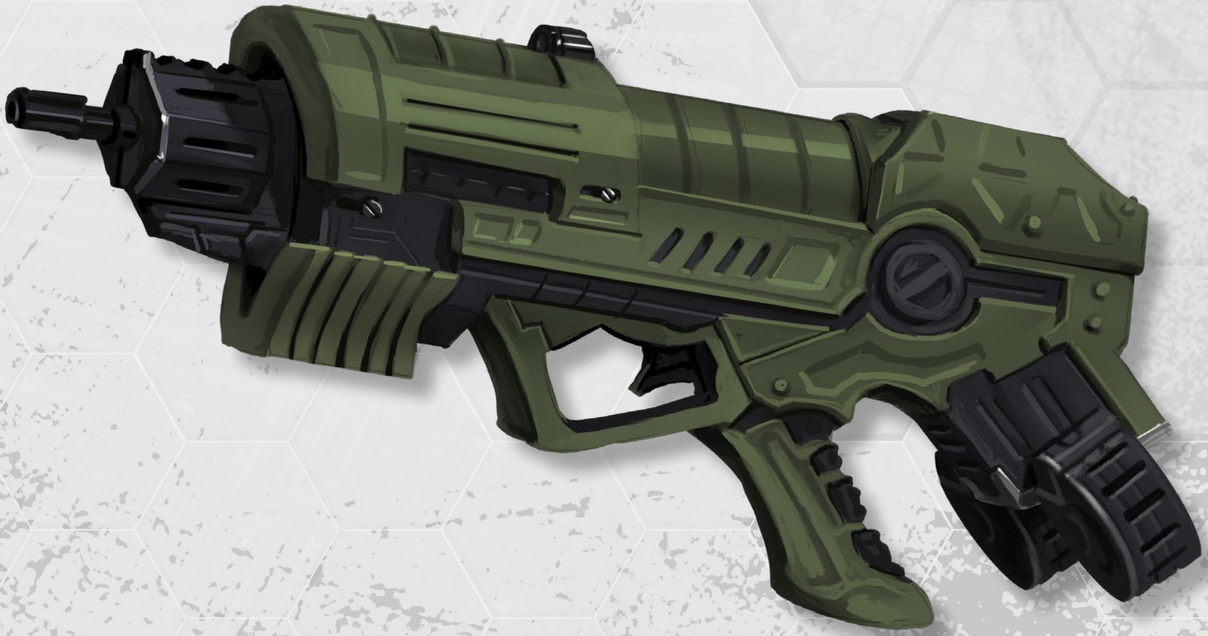
A03/48956

NAVY COMBAT SHOTGUN

The navy-issue combat shotgun is a bullpup design, fed by a seven-round magazine inserted through the stock. An extended 18-round drum is also available but this makes the weapon extremely clumsy. It is thus poorly suited to fluid combat through a boarded ship's corridors, although on the defensive it can be effective. The standard configuration weapon has a short barrel, laser aiming aid and a vertical foregrip.

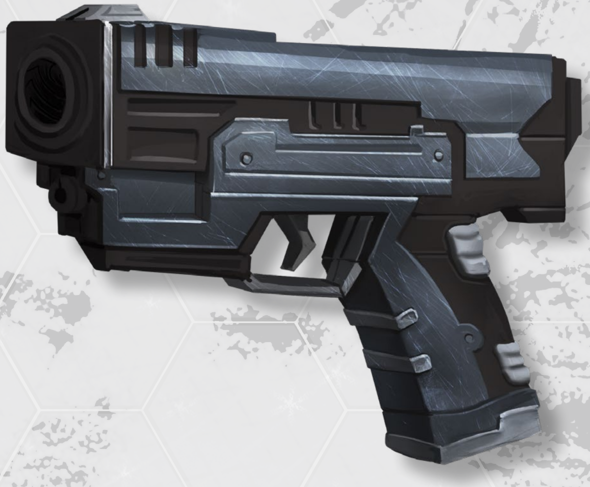
SolSec uses the same gun for close-quarters combat, sometimes with the drum magazine as a very obvious hint not to start anything. Heavy buckshot is normally used but stun rounds are available. These detonate with an incredibly loud noise and scatter small soft plastic pellets which, in theory at least, will not kill. Stun rounds are normally used by SolSec – an entire drum of them blasted into a room generally makes the following arrest procedure much easier.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Navy Combat Shotgun	12	50	4D+2	5 (6.8 with drum)	Cr1500	7 or 18	Cr10 or Cr24	Bulky
Stun Round	—	50	2D+1	—	Cr1500	7 or 18	Cr10 or Cr24	Bulky, Stun



A03/48956

GAUSS PERSONAL DEFENCE WEAPON



The Confederation Army, and units equipped to Home Guard levels, use gauss weapons as the standard small arm. Sidearms for combat personnel are gauss pistols, although large stocks of conventional semi-automatic pistols are retained for security and low-threat situations. The 4mm gauss rifle used by Confederation forces is also near-identical to the Imperial model. However, the Confederation makes use of gauss weapons not seen in Imperial hands.

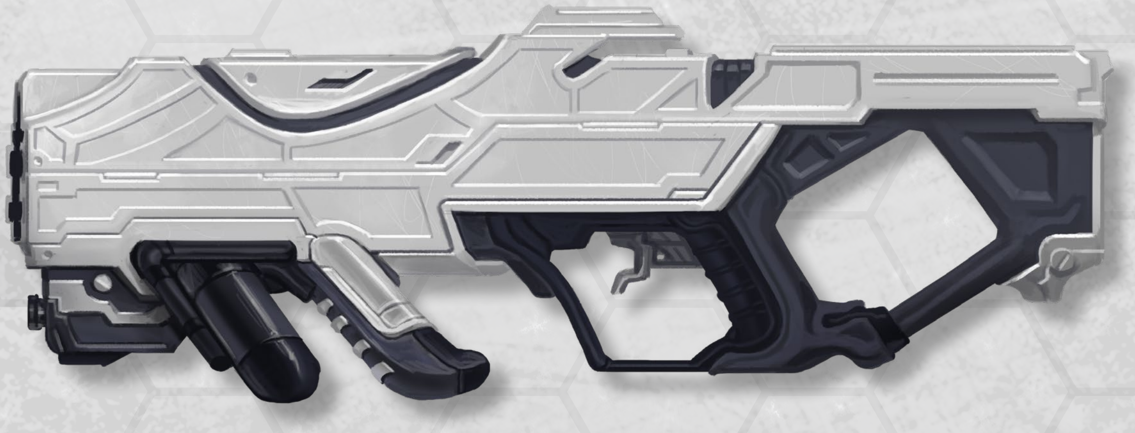
The gauss personal defence weapon, or GPDW, is essentially a scaled-up gauss pistol with a higher rate of fire. Its barrel is a little longer, making room for a vertical foregrip, and a detachable wire stock is provided. The weapon uses a standard 40-round magazine but can take an extended 60-round version. GPDWs are often issued to pilots and vehicle crews instead of a sidearm.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
GPDW	12	40	3D	1.4	Cr1250	40 or 60	Cr20 or 30	AP3, Auto 3

A03/75674

GAUSS CLOSE-COMBAT WEAPON

The GCCW is a full-size gauss submachinegun. It has a folding stock and a bayonet lug, although one is rarely fitted. A 60-round magazine is standard but a 120-round drum may be used. This slows the weapon's reaction time a little but provides impressive firepower.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
GCCW	12	100	3D+2	2 or 3.2 (with drum)	Cr2250	60 or 120	Cr30 or 60	AP3, Auto 4

ROBOTS

The Solomani Confederation is generally more accepting of robotic technology than the Imperium. In Terran culture, semi-autonomous robots appeared at roughly the same time as interstellar travel, resulting in a wide divergence of attitude toward intelligent machines among different Terran-descended communities throughout the Solomani Sphere. On some worlds, robots are outlawed or distrusted, especially where the Society for Sovereignty of Man over Machine is active. The society vigorously opposes any advanced A.I. research that might lead to independent machine intelligence.

Solomani have the same range of robots as the Imperium but tend to make more use of large vehicle-sized robotic machines such as robot construction equipment. The armed forces routinely deploy robotic ammunition carriers, which reload standard magazines passed to them and some robotic support platforms. These are not autonomous but will follow the directions of a designated soldier with limited initiative.

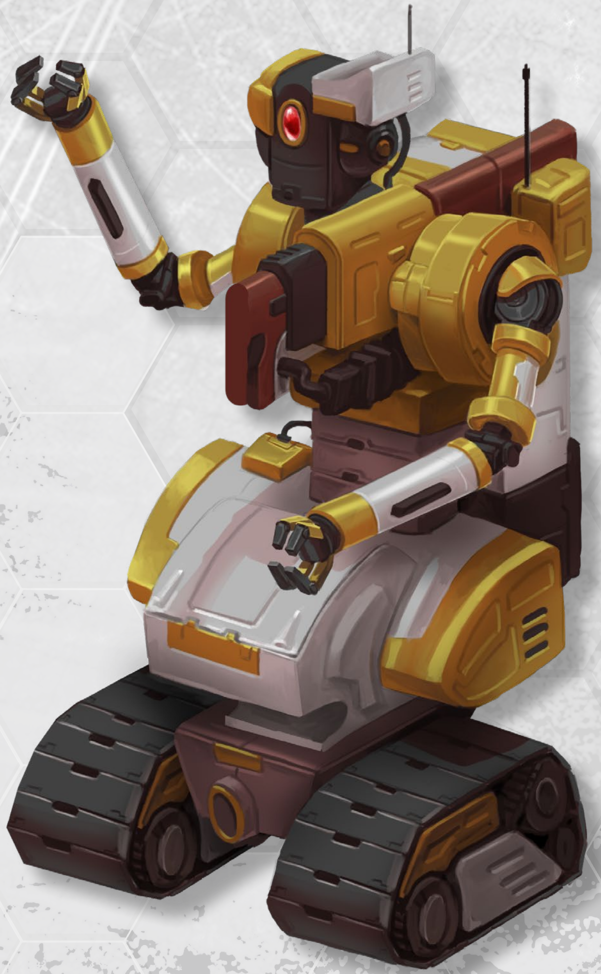
A11/58231

CONFEDERATION ARMY AMMOBOT

An ammobot is built on a low tracked chassis, with an ammunition hopper on the back, reloading station in the centre and a magazine dispenser at the front and each side. The hopper holds a single ammunition type and a single magazine type can be accommodated. Usually this is to fit the standard 4mm gauss rifle used by most Confederation Army formations, although ammobots can be quickly reconfigured to operate with other weapons. Some variant types can dispense more than one ammunition type but these are more likely to be in use with SolSec or navy personnel than the army.

The ammobot is lightly armoured and quite tough. It is capable of automatically moving from a unit's position to a supply dump and back again without getting stuck or colliding with anything but that is about the limit of its capabilities. The reloading mechanism holds 20 magazines. As these are taken by soldiers, empty ones can be inserted through a slot in the top of the mechanism. Those too dented for safe use are spat out of another slot as they pass through the mechanism, generally eliciting jeers and humorous insults in non-critical situations. The ammunition hopper holds 24,000 rounds of gauss rifle ammunition, sufficient to reload 300 magazines and their internal batteries are also charged if they remain in the robot for any length of time. When using larger calibres, such as advanced combat rifle ammunition, capacity is greatly reduced.

Ammobots are widely used in civilian life, repurposed as dispensers of all manner of useful items. A popular vid show of recent years has focussed on modifying robots and devices; its all-time highest rated episode featured the on-the-go barbecue devised by an independent survey and exploration crew, enabling them to feed samples of local plant and animal life into the 'bot and enjoy a tasty chargrilled meal on the march.



ROBOT	HITS	SPEED	TL	COST
Ammobot	20	6m	12	Cr62000

SKILLS	None
ATTACKS	None
TRAITS	Armour (+4)
PROGRAMMING	Basic

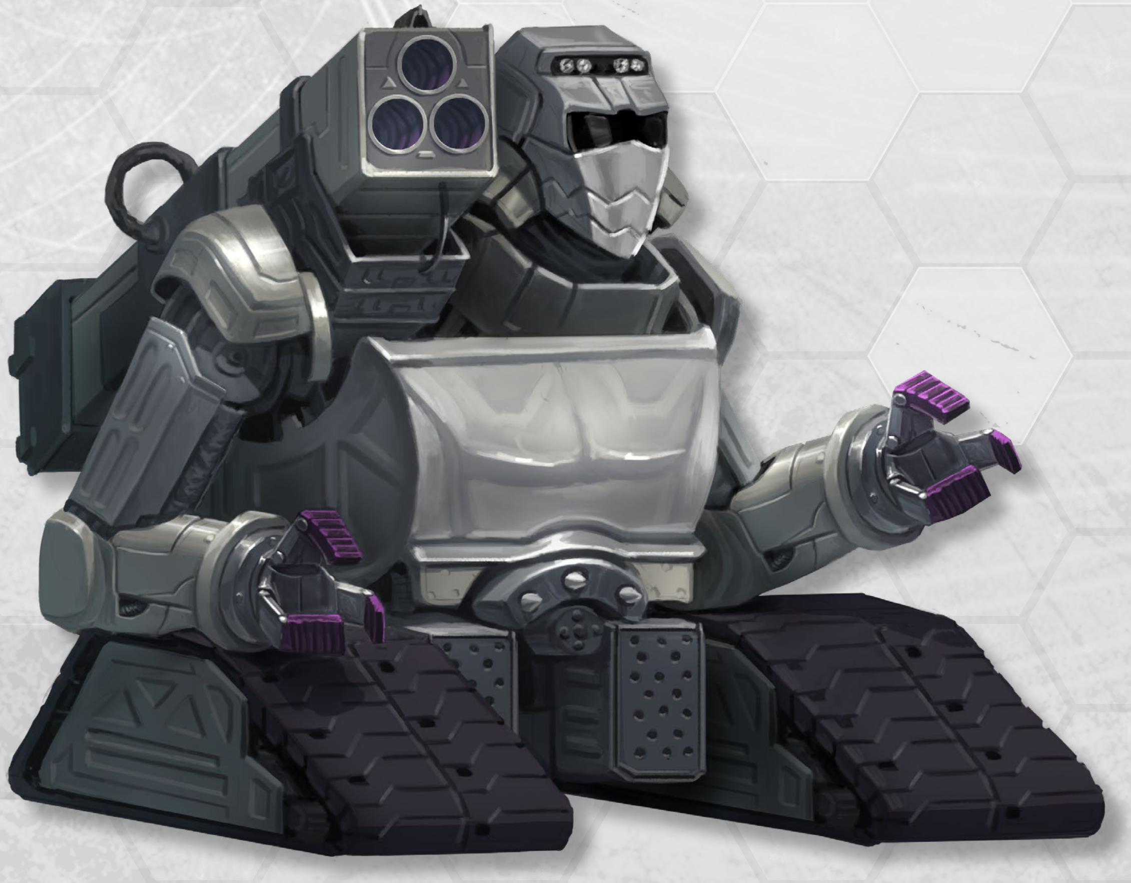
A11/58231 CONFEDERATION ARMY MORTARBOT

Built on a larger chassis than the ammobot but still capable of fitting inside a grav APC or assault shuttle, the mortarbot is armed with a three-barrel breech-loaded smoothbore mortar on a limited-traverse mount. Elevation is more free but the weapon has to return to the vertical for reloading. The three barrels are arranged in a triangular configuration, which rotates to align the breech with the loading mechanism. One barrel can be fired at a time or all three in rapid succession.

Accuracy with standard munitions is unimpressive but the weapon's limited range ensures that deviation is not excessive. Designated and guided payloads are available but for the most part the mortarbot is used to deliver a hail of rapid fire on enemy positions or break up an attack on friendly units. Eighteen bombs are carried in the rear of the robot's chassis, with three more in ready-to-fire positions in the breech.

Mortarbots are sometimes used in non-military applications. Foliage clearance is one common application, on worlds where the local vegetation is hazardous to humans. Firefighting bots can lob chemical warheads into a fire, scattering either foam or particles with a huge heat capacity, effectively drawing the heat out of the fire. A reconnaissance and surveillance variant is also sometimes used, which lobs camera-equipped drones high into the air for local-area mapping. This is rather inefficient but sometimes useful in areas of heavy vegetation or cluttered rocky overhangs.

ROBOT	**HITS**	**SPEED**	**TL**	**COST**
Mortarbot	34	6m	12	Cr114000
SKILLS	None			
ATTACKS	Mortar Bomb (9D, Artillery, Auto 3, Blast 6)			
TRAITS	Armour (+6)			
PROGRAMMING	Basic			



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Three-barrel Mortar	12	600	9D	14	Cr16000	3	Cr275	Artillery, Auto 3, Blast 6

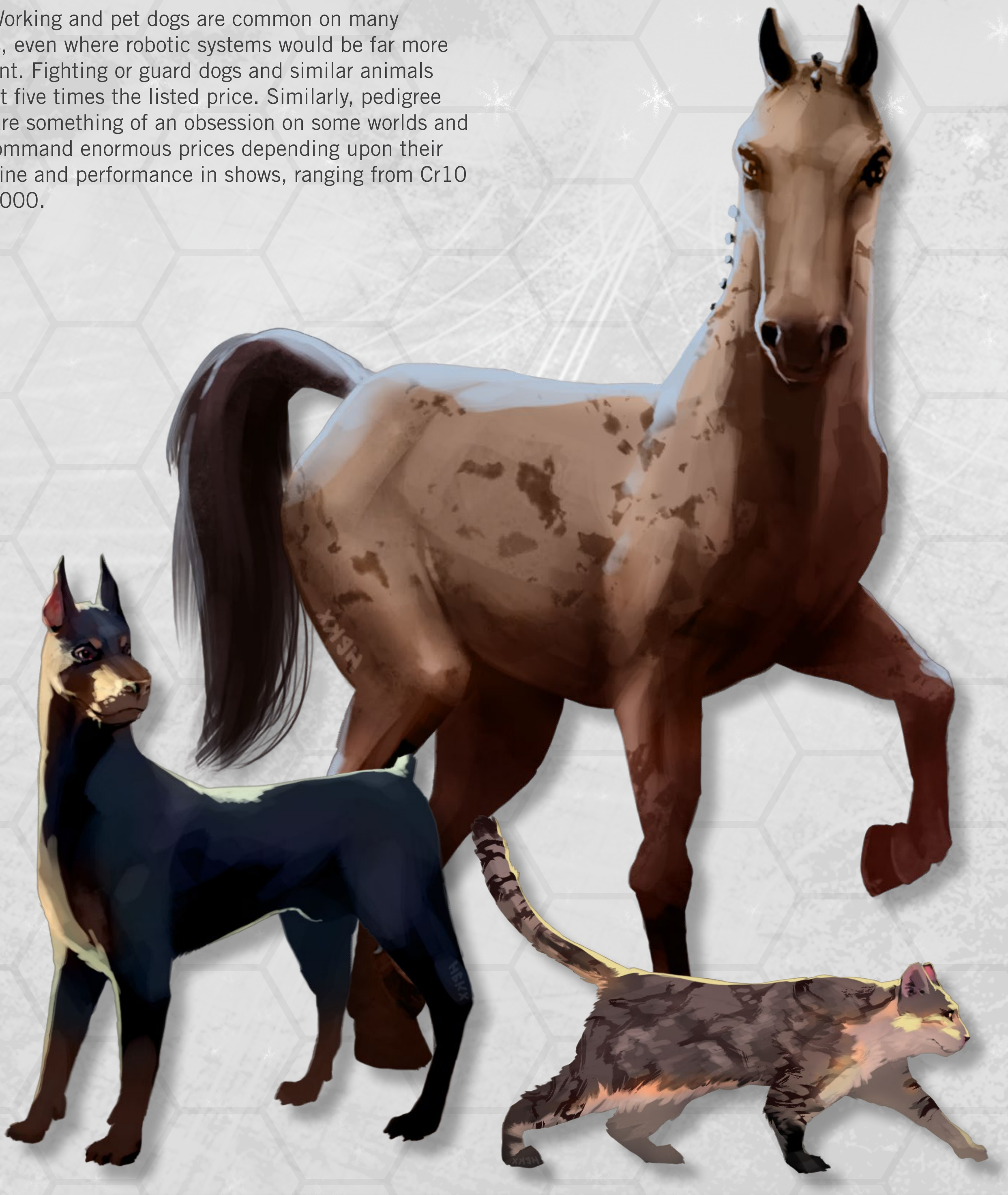
COMPANION ANIMALS

The Solomani culture generally involves a love of animals. It is not uncommon to encounter people keeping animals in conditions that require them to go to a lot of trouble, such as aboard starships and space stations or on inhospitable worlds.

Cat: Cats are typically kept as pets or for vermin control. Prices vary depending on breed, ranging from Cr1 to Cr600.

Dog: Working and pet dogs are common on many worlds, even where robotic systems would be far more efficient. Fighting or guard dogs and similar animals start at five times the listed price. Similarly, pedigree dogs are something of an obsession on some worlds and can command enormous prices depending upon their bloodline and performance in shows, ranging from Cr10 to Cr2000.

Riding/Working Horse: Horses are popular for recreational riding among the better-off echelons of society on many worlds. On some backwater planets they can be encountered as working animals. For example, it is not uncommon to see farm hands riding horses guiding huge agricultural robots. Specialist animals such as cavalry mounts or racehorses start at five times the normal price and high-quality animals can cost 1,000 times as much again (or more!). Typical mounts can walk at Idle speed or running at Very Slow speed and cost Cr1200.



CHAPTER-ELEVEN

SOLOMANI TRAVELLERS

The rules presented in this chapter will create Travellers from the Solomani Confederation or a world that has a similar culture. Non-Solomani humans and even some aliens who come from a Confederation world can use this system, whereas those from other cultures – such as a pure-blood Solomani from an Imperial world – cannot.

Unless stated otherwise, the usual Traveller creation rules from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* apply to Solomani Travellers. Where necessary the term ‘racial Solomani’ will distinguish Travellers belonging to the Solomani race as opposed to anyone from the Solomani Confederation.

PLAYING A SOLOMANI

There are some aspects of Solomani society that are questionable or downright unpleasant. There is racism and discrimination in Solomani society but they are not ‘Space Nazis’ or ‘Interstellar Warriors of the Soviet People’. Whether such a society could survive in the long run is an open question but it would certainly be uncomfortable to roleplay such people.

The foremost aspects of Solomani culture come not from contempt for other races but from pride in their own. Solomani are taught from a young age that they have enormous potential and what might be termed the ‘capacity to succeed’. This is referred to as the Call to Greatness by many Solomani philosophers. It is not that other races are inferior as such, just that the Solomani have the potential and perhaps the destiny to be extra-special. The distinction is subtle but significant.

A good analogy is a child who is encouraged and supported when they want to try sport, music or whatever their field of endeavour may be. That child is more likely to enter and try to win a contest than one who has never been encouraged. The child’s belief they can win might be far greater than their actual talent but a mediocre tryer will often do better than a talented but unsure rival. For the Solomani people, simply being Solomani is encouragement and confirmation they can succeed.

Solomani people thus tend to be a bit full of themselves, taking perhaps an excessive pride in their race’s achievements. Many can be compared to fans of a successful sporting team, raving about how ‘we’ won the game or ‘we’ are better than our rivals, despite them ahead on points right now. Such people are prone to group narcissism and more likely to be negative towards non-Solomani than those who have actually succeeded at something in their own right.

Attitudes to SolSec and security services in general can vary. Those who have had bad experiences tend to be fearful and many of those who have not will assume a negative attitude towards SolSec indicates a guilty secret. On the other hand, there are many who admire and respect SolSec for the work they do in keeping the Imperials from meddling in Solomani affairs. Most simply consider SolSec a fact of life – mostly positive, sometimes a bit scary, but necessary and certainly better than letting agenda-pushing crazies blow up the starport.

Attitudes to non-Solomani humans and aliens can be condescending and patronising but hostility is more likely to be political than racial. The two are much the same thing with some outsiders – the Vegans, for example – but dislike tends to stem from historical clashes rather than an idea that aliens are somehow intrinsically bad. Again, this is a subtle distinction since it can still lead to racist or discriminatory policies. The situation can be compared to seeing a person dressed in the clothing worn by a street gang with a bad reputation. In this case the alien’s race rather than their clothing causes the Solomani to identify them with a group that has harmed Solomani people before. Most Solomani know this is unfair but ill-feeling over past incidents may still cause them to react badly upon seeing a member of that group.

There is a dark side to this and in some parts of the Confederation ‘we’re the best’ is replaced by ‘everyone else is inadequate, stupid or just plain bad’ but this is by no means a universal sentiment. Haters are no more common in the Confederation than anywhere else – and just as likely to be despised by more enlightened individuals – but the Solomani way of thinking does lend itself to the creation of oppressive regimes where leaders are inclined that way.

Overall, the typical Solomani can be a little overbearing around non-Solomani, since they tend to assume a leadership role whether this is appropriate or not. They are proud of their race's achievements and feel there is something that makes them special in their Solomani blood. At the same time they are – in general – accepting of other cultures and respectful towards worthy outsiders.

A typical Solomani Traveller will be proud and competitive. They will work readily enough with non-Solomani so long as they are treated fairly but will not tolerate perceived injustice. They will not expect to be treated with respect just for being Solomani but because they are giving their best – and being Solomani means they will do so all the time.

A Solomani Traveller will try to outshine crewmates on every occasion. Those with generally positive personalities will do so honestly; weaker individuals may falsify results, overstate their achievements or claim credit for the work of others. They may also claim that their rivals have done some or all of these things. Good and bad people exist in all cultures but behaviours tend to be more pronounced among the Solomani due to their nature.

Thus a Solomani Traveller is likely to be a solid, dependable and hard-working colleague or a sneaky weasel who wants to sleaze their way to a position of respect. Either way, they will expect to be recognised for their (real or claimed) efforts and given a fair chance to impress. Those of a positive disposition do not expect to simply win the game (whatever the 'game' may be at that time) just for being Solomani – but they do expect to be given a chance to play hard and do their best.

Potential Secrets

The nature of Solomani society is such that some people become covert informers for SolSec at an early age or during their career. Others may have secrets of the sort SolSec exists to ferret out. To simulate both these aspects, Solomani Travellers are generated with greater secrecy towards other players than is normal, so what a Solomani Traveller tells their companions may not be the whole truth – but the Referee knows the facts and can use them when necessary. Typically this will be either something to do with the Traveller's genetic heritage, membership of a faction or other organisation or status as a covert SolSec monitor.

Naming and Titles

Solomani are given a first name at birth and take a family name from one of their parents. Ranks or titles are stated before a name. Titles of nobility are abolished in the Solomani Confederation. SOC 11+ indicates a background with wealth, celebrity or links to the governing Solomani Party.

All of Earth's peoples participated in the colonisation of space and over thousands of years human cultures have often blended together. First and last and sometimes middle names will often come from different ethnic backgrounds. For example, Yumiko Egerszegi mixes Japanese and Hungarian.

Social Standing

SOC in the Solomani Confederation represents circumstances such as class and wealth. It also reflects their relationship with the dominant Solomani Party, which exerts significant influence in Confederation society. Jobs applications, bank loans, licenses or business deals can all be expedited with support of influential Party members.

A Traveller who starts out with SOC 9+ usually has family or patrons with influential positions in the Solomani Party hierarchy or possibly with SolSec or the military, the two other institutions that wield the most power. The greater their SOC, the more powerful these patrons will be. Similarly, individuals of lower SOC may defer to the Traveller in the hope of benefitting from their influence.

A Traveller with SOC 6–8 has a normal relationship with the Solomani Party. They may know people who are ordinary Party members or even participate in Party activities themselves but exert no personal influence.

A Traveller that begins with SOC 5 or less has an adversarial relationship with the Solomani Party. Their family may be associated with a faction organisation, region or religion that the world's Solomani Party considers disloyal or dangerous. The Traveller might be stigmatised as inferior for lacking pure Solomani blood. Perhaps their parents offended an important Solomani Party official or were arrested by Solomani Security. The lower a Traveller's SOC, the more institutionalised discrimination is likely to be encountered.

In some ways, the Confederation is not as socially stratified as the Imperium. Since there is no hereditary nobility, individuals have the opportunity to dramatically improve their SOC by joining the Solomani Party hierarchy or rising to high rank in the military or SolSec, all of which will result in increased SOC.

Party Patronage and Advancement

The pervasive influence of the Solomani Party at all levels of Confederation society means that individuals favoured by the Party, as indicated by high SOC, will receive assistance in their careers and those who are disfavoured will be penalised.

These rules apply to all careers in the Solomani Confederation except and Rogue and Drifter.

Qualification: Party connections are vital for finding good jobs. Travellers apply their SOC modifier to qualification rolls in addition to the usual DM.

Automatic Commission or Advancement through Patronage: Travellers with SOC 10+ may advance through patronage rather than merit. If a commission or advancement roll fails but the Traveller has high enough SOC they gain the position via patronage. The Traveller receives the desired commission or promotion but does not get the extra roll on the Skills and Training tables that success normally brings.

There are two exceptions to this; if a natural 2 was rolled or if the Traveller would be forced out of the career due to a roll lower than the number of terms served that means no commission or advancement is gained.

There are limits to how far a Traveller can rise through patronage. The Party Patronage table shows the SOC required to gain automatic advancement.

Party Patronage

SOC	If Advancement Roll Fails	If Commission Roll Fails
10	Automatic promotion if presently Rank 0	Automatic commission
11	Automatic promotion if presently Rank 0–1	Automatic commission
12	Automatic promotion if presently Rank 0–2	Automatic commission
13+	Automatic promotion if presently Rank 0–3	Automatic commission

HUMAN RACIAL BACKGROUND

Racial Solomani dominate the Solomani Confederation but other human races also live there. In the Solomani Confederation 'race' does not refer to a terrestrial race such as Caucasian but instead to a subspecies of Humaniti, such as Solomani or Vilani. Race can be identified by family history, genealogy and physical appearance on worlds up to TL5, by blood tests at TL6 and by more precise genetic testing on TL7 worlds. It is recorded in identification papers such as birth certificates and passports.

After determining the six Characteristics, roll on the Human Racial Background table, adding the Traveller's SOC modifier to the roll.

Human Racial Background

2D	Racial Background
2 or less	Non-Solomani Human
3–4	Mixed Race Human
5 or more	Racial Solomani

Non-Solomani Human: The Traveller is descended from a non-Terran branch of Humaniti; most likely the Vilani. They are unlikely to be a member of a race that originated far from the Solomani Confederation, such as the Zhodani. Their features could appear slightly exotic, making them a visible minority on Solomani worlds.

Non-Solomani humans may suffer racial discrimination. Unless 'passing', as detailed on page 126, the Traveller cannot enter the Solomani Party career and suffers DM-2 when attempting to enter the SolSec, Navy or Marine careers. The Traveller suffers DM-2 on advancement rolls in any careers except Drifter, Rogue or the worker assignment of Citizen. They have DM+1 to qualify for Rogue careers.

Mixed Race: The Traveller shares racial Solomani and non-Solomani ancestry. They might be part of the generic mixed race of Humaniti that predominates in the Imperium and is still common on those old Solomani Confederation worlds settled in the Rule of Man or Vilani Empire. The Traveller might instead be a child or grandchild from a relationship between a racial Solomani and a non-Solomani or mixed race humans.

Mixed Race humans are subject to racial prejudice in some areas but moderate Solomani Party factions accept them. A mixed race human has DM-3 to qualify for a Solomani Party career and suffers DM-1 to advancement within every career except Drifter, Rogue or the worker assignment of Citizen. The Traveller has DM+1 to qualify for any Rogue career.

Racial Solomani: The Traveller is of pure Solomani ancestry. They suffer no penalties in Solomani society. Due to the privileges offered to racial Solomani, it may be harder to adjust to life on the fringes of society. This results in DM-1 to advancement in the Drifter career.

Passing: Since most mixed-race and some non-Solomani humans can physically pass themselves off as racial Solomani, people will sometimes risk criminal penalties to falsify their own or their children's official racial status in order to avoid discrimination.

Non-Solomani or mixed race Travellers may opt to determine if they or their forebears successfully hid their real ancestry. This is a SOC check; Very Difficult (12+) for non-Solomani and Average (8+) for mixed race. Success means bribery, forgery or human error result in the Traveller having official papers that falsely identify them as racial Solomani. Failure means no opportunity existed to alter apparent race.

A Traveller passing for racial Solomani will be discovered if they try to enter SolSec, the Navy or the Marines as these services perform detailed medical tests on recruits during their induction process. The Traveller is otherwise treated as racial Solomani in all respects, with one exception:

If a passing Traveller throws a natural 2 on an advancement or survival roll, it means that in addition to the usual effects, the truth of their heritage is discovered. The ensuing scandal or criminal penalties halves SOC, rounding up. If the Traveller was in a Solomani Party career their rank in it drops to 0. If the Traveller continues the career process they do so using their real race.

VOLUNTEERING

The Solomani Confederation encourages patriotic citizens to volunteer to help protect the security of the state. Citizens may do so by choosing to become part of their world's Home Forces reserves or a Monitor on a part-time basis even as they continue in full-time careers.

Home Forces Reserves

The Home Forces are the planetary defence forces of the Solomani Confederation. They include part-time and reserve units made up of citizen warriors and retired veterans.

A Confederation citizen not in an active military assignment such as Army, Marine or Navy careers may enlist in the groundside component of their world's Home Forces Reserves. Travellers that follow merchant marine or free trader Merchant assignments, or were previously in a Navy career, may join the naval or groundside component of the Home Forces. Enlistment requires a commitment to report for periodic part-time training or duties. This means a Traveller that is in a Drifter or Rogue (pirate) career may not join the Home Guard. Otherwise, enlistment is automatic.

The Home Forces Reserves is not a career, as reserve service requires only a few weeks commitment each year. A Traveller who joins the Reserves continues in their present assignment.

Training: Upon enlistment Home Forces Reserves members roll on the Reserves Training table and receive the skill at the level shown, unless they already have it. In addition, all groundside Home Forces Reserves personnel receive Gun Combat 0. All naval Home Forces Reserves personnel receive Vacc Suit 0.

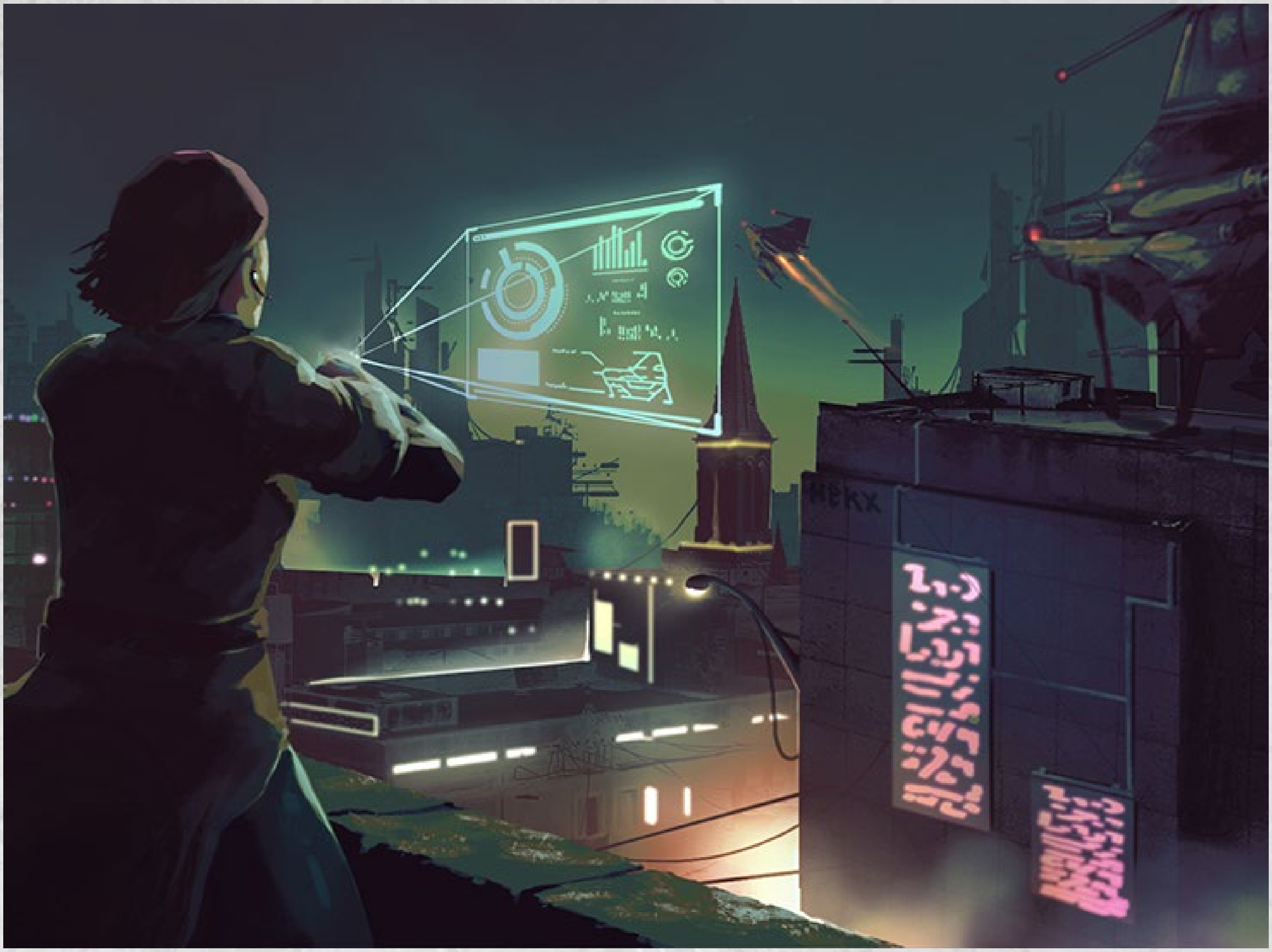
Reserves Training

1D	Groundside Reserves	Naval Reserves
1	Gun Combat (any) or Heavy Weapons 1 (any)	Gunner 1 (any)
2	Mechanic 1	Engineer (any) 1
3	One of Drive (any) 1, Flyer (any) 1 or Seafarer (any) 1	Pilot (any) 1
4	Electronics (any) 1	Electronics (any) 1
5	Recon or Survival 1	Vacc Suit 1
6	Leadership or Tactics (military) 1	Leadership or Tactics (naval) 1

Rank: Most Home Forces maintain a rank structure similar to the Confederation Armed Forces. Use Army ranks for the groundside Reserves and Confederation Navy ranks for the naval Reserves. Home Forces Reserves ranks are preceded by the word 'reserve' in situations when the Traveller is not on active duty.

Army, Marine and Navy veterans who later join the Home Forces or Home Forces Reserves transfer their military rank over. Thus, a marine force commander with (rank 3) would become a reserve major (rank 3) in the Home Forces Reserves.

A Traveller in the Reserves additionally rolls for commission and advancement within the Home Forces. Use the standard Army or Navy advancement tables each term, with DM-2 since senior officers tend to be full-time leaders of the reserves, with lower-ranked



personnel pulled in when needed. No skills are gained as a result of commission or promotion within the Reserves. If the Traveller held prior military rank before joining the Home Forces Reserves it is quite possible for them to have different ranks due to advancement.

Risks: If a Traveller in the Home Forces Reserves rolls a natural 2 on their survival roll, it means they have suffered misfortune during a mobilisation or training exercise. Roll on the Army Mishap table for groundside Reserves Guard or Confederation Navy Mishap table for naval Reserves instead of their ordinary career's Mishap table. It is possible to suffer a mishap in both the Reserves and the Traveller's normal career, in the same term.

SolSec Monitors

Solomani Security (SolSec) is the Solomani Confederation's secret police and intelligence agency. It is possible to openly join SolSec, working as an analyst or officer by simply qualifying for the SolSec career, as detailed on page 134. In addition to those professional agents, SolSec coordinates a vast number of volunteer sources and informers. These are known as monitors.

At the start of any term, any Traveller who is not a SolSec agent or secret agent may opt to become a monitor. Enlistment is automatic and runs in parallel with their existing career. A Traveller may also opt to cease to be a monitor at the beginning of a term.

SolSec quietly uses its influence to further the careers of monitors. A SolSec monitor gains DM+1 on all advancement rolls in any career other than Drifter. On rare occasions, a monitor may discover information or attract attention that leads to contact with SolSec operatives. If a monitor ever rolls a natural 2 on their survival roll, roll on the SolSec Mishaps table instead of their own career. If a monitor ever rolls a natural 12 on a survival roll, roll an event from the SolSec Events table rather than using their own career's table and acquire one SolSec agent as a Contact. Mishaps and events are still rolled for the Traveller's normal career, which can make for quite an eventful term.

Monitors do not have formal rank but SolSec rates them based on their position and usefulness. Any time a monitor also receives promotion in their own career, their monitor rank goes up by +1 (to a maximum of 6). A Traveller with monitor rank 3+ receives one extra Benefit roll. This roll may be taken on their own career's table or on the SolSec Benefits table. Monitor rank is primarily honorary in nature. Solomani use the term 'monitor rank' as a cynical synonym for a position without value or authority.

A monitor may continue to be a monitor even after the Traveller creation process ends. SolSec may act to protect and advance interests of any monitors who are believed to be in danger or positioned to provide information of great interest to Solomani Cause.

PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Any Traveller who qualifies for the Party career can automatically join the Solomani Party. A Traveller who is a racial Solomani or passing as one and not in a Party career may still become a member of the Solomani Party. This means they participate in periodic Solomani Party meetings and events but do not make the Solomani Cause their career.

If the Traveller has SOC 9 or less, joining the Party requires giving up one of that term's rolls on the Skill and Training table. Instead of rolling, the Traveller receives Party membership and SOC +1. This represents the time spent on Party activities. If the Traveller has SOC 10+, joining the Party requires no sacrifice but gives no extra benefit; the Traveller already has Party connections such as family members and likely is a guest at Party events on a regular basis; joining is a formality.

Travellers that join the Solomani Party effectively have Party rank 0. This can only be increased by pursuing a career within the Party itself.

CAREERS

Solomani Confederation Travellers may enter most of the careers in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Exceptions are detailed here.

New Careers

Careers described in this book reflect specific Solomani Confederation institutions.

Navy: The Solomani Confederation Navy service combines the duties of the Imperium's Navy and Scout Service.
Party: A Dedicated cadre in the dominant Solomani Movement.
SolSec: The Traveller is an operative in the Solomani Confederation's political security and intelligence service. Note that Solomani may also select other Agent assignments representing police officers, intelligence agents of other government ministries or the armed forces and corporate spies.

Restricted Careers

Traveller Core Rulebook careers are available to Solomani Confederation Travellers, with the following restrictions:

Marine: The Confederation Marines are subordinate to the Confederation Navy and specialise as ship's troops. Only the star marine assignment is available.
Navy: Use the Navy career in this book instead.
Noble: This career is unavailable. A Traveller interested in being one of the elite should join the Solomani Party instead.
Scout: This career is unavailable. A Traveller who wants a similar experience should enlist in the Confederation Navy instead.

The Solomani Draft

Confederation Travellers that opt for the Draft use the Solomani Draft table.

Solomani Draft

1D	Career (assignment)
1	Navy (any)
2	Army (any)
3	Marine (star marines)
4	Merchant (merchant marine)
5	SolSec (any)
6	Agent (law enforcement)

New Career Summary

Careers	Assignment	Qualification	Survival	Advancement
Party	—	SOC 6+	—	—
—	Official	—	INT 5+	SOC 7+
—	Intellectual	—	EDU 6+	INT 6+
	Militant	—	END 7+	INT 6+
Navy	—	INT 5+	—	—
—	Line/Crew	—	INT 5+	EDU 7+
—	Technical	—	INT 6+	EDU 6+
—	Flight	—	DEX 7+	EDU 5+
SolSec	—	INT 6+	—	—
—	Field Agent	—	INT 7+	INT 5+
	Administration	—	EDU 5+	INT 7+
	Secret Agent	—	Cover career DM-1	Cover career DM+1

1 PARTY

These are influential members of the Solomani Movement and its ruling Party.
Qualification: SOC 6+. SOC 6+. Must be of pure Solomani race (or pass as one) with SOC 7+. If you are aged 34 or more: DM-1. Per previous career: DM-1. You qualify automatically if your SOC is 10+.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Official: You served in the ruling Solomani Party organisation, making you eligible for a government or civil service position or appointment to one of the many corporations or nongovernmental organisations run by the Party.
Intellectual: You were a philosopher or spokesperson for the Solomani Cause, working to promote and develop the views of your particular Party faction. You could be a rabble-rousing activist or work for Party-affiliated mass media, a think tank or an academic institution.
Militant: You were a front-line fighter for the Solomani Cause. You may have been a rebel waging a guerrilla war to topple non-Solomani governments or a tough Party street fighter who can turn a noisy demonstration into a bloody riot. Many militant groups are not officially recognised by the Confederation and might actually be condemned for their actions.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT
Administrator	INT 5+	SOC 7+
Intellectual	EDU 6+	INT 6+
Militant	END 7+	INT 6+

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

1D	CASH	BENEFITS
1	Cr5000	Weapon and a Contact
2	Cr15000	INT +1
3	Cr30000	EDU +1
4	Cr40000	Weapon
5	Cr50000	Ship Share and an Ally
6	Cr60000	Terran Adventurers Society
7	Cr70000	SC Courier

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ADVANCED EDUCATION (MIN. EDU 8)
1	Carouse	Advocate	Admin
2	END +1	Electronics (comms)	Advocate
3	Persuade	Deception	Electronics (computers)
4	INT +1	Drive	Language
5	EDU +1	Flyer	Pilot
6	SOC +1	Leadership	Any Science
1D	**ADMINISTRATOR**	**INTELLECTUAL**	**MILITANT**
1	Admin	Investigate	Deception
2	Advocate	Advocate	Explosives
3	Electronics	Science (genetics)	Gun Combat
4	Diplomat	Persuade	Melee
5	Persuade	Art (holography or writing)	Electronics
6	Admin	Science (history, philosophy or psychology)	Streetwise

RANKS AND BENEFITS

RANK	OFFICIAL	SKILL OR BENEFIT
0	Cadre	—
1	Alternate	Admin 1 and SOC 10
2	Delegate	SOC 11
3	Deputy	Advocate 1 and SOC 12
4	Commissioner	Leadership 1 and SOC 13
5	Chairman	SOC 14
6	Minister	SOC 15

Advancement in Party Official rank automatically grants SOC. If a Traveller already has that level of SOC or greater, SOC is unchanged.

RANK	INTELLECTUAL	SKILL OR BENEFIT	MILITANT	SKILL OR BENEFIT
0	—	—	Follower	—
1	Pundit	Advocate 1 or Science 1	Soldier	Gun Combat 1 or Melee 1
2	—	—	—	—
3	Philosopher	+1 Social Standing	Cell Leader	Advocate 1 or Leadership 1
4	—	—	—	—
5	Leader	SOC 10 or SOC +1, whichever is higher	Brigade Commander	Tactics (military) 1
6	—	—	—	—

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	You are involved in a riot, revolution, assassination or terrorist attack and suffer injury. Roll once on the Injury table. Gain one of Explosives 1, Gun Combat 1 or Melee 1.
2	An anonymous SolSec monitor transmits reports claiming your political views are out of step with the current zeitgeist. SolSec moves against you, ending your career.
3	You become disillusioned with the inability of the Solomani Party to achieve positive results and feel compelled to drift away from your present career. If your next career term is Drifter gain an extra roll on the assignment skill table of your choice.
4	A senior Solomani Party member who was your patron falls from favour and in the ensuing purge you go down with them. You may defend or denounce them. If you defended your patron, increase your Advocate skill by +1 but lose SOC -1. If you denounce them, you are still forced out but as a reward for following the Party line, you also keep this term's Benefit roll.
5	An intimate or friend is discovered to have secret non-Solomani blood. Due to your connection to them, you are tainted by this scandal, which forces you out of the Party. If you decide to remain on favourable terms with them despite this shocking revelation, gain them as an Ally but lose SOC -1.
6	You travel to the Imperium to assist the Solomani Movement in the occupied systems. Imperial authorities discover your activities and arrest you on suspicion of aiding terrorism. You are interrogated and imprisoned, then deported back to the Confederation. You must take the Prisoner career in your next term.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table but you are not expelled from the career.
3	Your connections in the Solomani Movement open up lucrative opportunities at a Party owned corporation. If you decide to transfer to a Citizen (corporate) or Merchant career in your next term, you automatically qualify and receive DM+2 on your first advancement roll.
4	Your accomplishments see you selected to deliver a speech at a Party Congress. Roll Advocate or Art (acting) 7+. If successful, gain SOC +1. If unsuccessful, lose SOC -1.
5	You are asked to take the blame for a senior Party member's mistakes. If you agree, suffer DM-1 to your next advancement roll but gain either an Ally or one extra Benefit roll. If you refuse, take DM-2 to your next advancement roll and gain them as a Rival.
6	Your faction is involved in a violent political struggle. Make an Advocate, Gun Combat, Explosives, Leadership or Streetwise check. If you succeed, you come out on the winning side and gain DM+2 on your next advancement roll. Fail and you suffer DM-2 on your next survival roll.
7	Life Event. Roll on the Solomani Life Events table on page 136.
8	You find evidence that casts doubt on a superior's commitment to the Solomani Cause. If you expose and denounce them, gain DM+2 to your next advancement roll. If you suppress the evidence and support them anyway, they become an Ally.
9	You become deeply involved in the Solomani Movement's factional politics. Gain one level in Advocate, Diplomacy, Persuade or Science (philosophy) but also acquire a Rival from another Party faction.
10	You use your standing with the Party to promote the career of an ideologically correct artist, journalist or performer. Receive either Arts 1 or Carouse 1 and gain a Contact in the media or entertainment industry.
11	You befriend a senior member of the Party hierarchy, who becomes an Ally and mentor. Either gain one level of Leadership or gain DM+4 to your next advancement roll thanks to their patronage.
12	Your efforts to advance the Solomani Cause are recognised by the Party. You are automatically promoted.

2 NAVY

The Confederation Navy patrol Solomani space and stand ready to resist Imperial, Aslan and Hiver aggression. They also perform exploration missions on the rimward frontiers and engage in routine survey and message transmission activities.

Qualification: INT 5+
If you are aged 34 or more: DM-2
Per previous career: DM-1

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:
Crew: You served as a general crewman, officer or political officer aboard a Solomani warship.
Technical: You served as a specialist technician, gunner, scientific or engineering officer on a Solomani warship. This will provide you with good technical skills but fewer opportunities for advancement.
Flight: You served as the pilot of a fighter, assault shuttle, system defence boat or other small vessel. This gives you excellent piloting skills and is a fast track to promotion but is also the most dangerous.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT
Line/Crew	INT 5+	EDU 7+
Technical	INT 6+	EDU 6+
Flight	DEX 7+	EDU 5+

Commission: SOC 8+

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

1D	CASH	BENEFITS
1	Cr4000	Air/Raft or Ship Share
2	Cr8000	INT +1
3	Cr10000	EDU +2 or two Ship Shares
4	Cr10000	Weapon
5	Cr20000	SOC + 1
6	Cr40000	Terran Adventurers Society
7	Cr50000	SOC +2

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ADVANCED EDUCATION (MINIMUM EDU 8)	OFFICER SKILLS (COMMISSIONED ONLY)
1	Language	Electronics (comms)	Admin	Admin
2	DEX +1	Gun Combat	Electronics	Astrogation
3	END +1	Gunner	Engineer	Diplomat
4	INT +1	Mechanic	Medic	Leadership
5	EDU +1	Vacc Suit	Pilot	Science
6	Carouse	Pilot	Navigation	Tactics (naval)
1D	**CREW**	**TECHNICAL**	**FLIGHT**	
1	Electronics (comms)	Engineer	Pilot	—
2	Gun Combat	Engineer	Flyer	—
3	Mechanic	Gunner	Gunner	—
4	Melee	Mechanic	Pilot (small craft)	—
5	Electronics (sensors)	Electronics (remote ops)	Astrogation	—
6	Vacc Suit	Electronics (sensors)	Electronics	—

RANKS AND BENEFITS

RANK	NCO RANK	SKILL OR BENEFIT
0	Starman	—
1	Alternate	Admin 1
2	Delegate	—
3	Deputy	Advocate 1
4	Commissioner	—
5	Chairman	Leadership 1
6	Minister	—

RANK	OFFICER RANK	SKILL OR BENEFIT
0	—	—
1	Ensign	SOC +1
2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	Leadership 1
3	Lieutenant	—
4	Commander	Tactics (naval) 1
5	Captain	SOC 10 or SOC +1, whichever is higher
6	Admiral	SOC 12 or SOC +1, whichever is higher

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Severely injured in action (this is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table). Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	You spend the entire term in the Frozen Watch, in cold sleep within a cryoberth. You are not ejected from the career but do not make either an advancement or skill rolls this term. You may automatically reenlist if you wish. This term is not counted toward your physical age (for the purposes of aging rolls); that is, your physical age will be four years younger than your chronological age.
3	In a moment of anger, you criticise the incompetence of an officer who you believe was promoted due to their Solomani Party connections. They discover or trump up evidence questioning your loyalty to the Solomani Cause, triggering a SolSec investigation that forces you out of the Navy. Exception: If you are a secret SolSec agent, you expose their activities. Your cover is blown and you must leave the service but you do not lose a Benefit roll.
4	During a crisis or battle, the ship's safety hinges on your actions. You must make a check using a skill that depends on your branch: Electronics (sensors) or Gunner if you are crew, Mechanic, Engineer or Vacc Suit if you are technical and Pilot or Tactics (naval) if you are flight. If you fail, the ship suffers severe damage and you are blamed for the disaster. You are court-martialled and discharged. If you succeed, your efforts ensure that you are honourably discharged. You still leave the career but may keep your Benefit roll from this term.
5	In a three-way political conflict between the Party, the Navy and SolSec, the Navy loses. You are among many personnel who are purged, ending your career. Exception: If you are a secret SolSec agent, you were instrumental in the purge. Your cover is blown, ending your career and you gain a former Navy officer as an Enemy, but do not lose a Benefit roll.
6	Injured. Roll on the Injury table.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table but you are not ejected from this career.
3	Your starship explores an alien world. Gain one of Animals (riding or training) 1, Survival 1, Recon 1 or Science 1.
4	Your warship is assigned to a lengthy patrol. In your off-duty time, you have a choice between recreation and joining a Party-sponsored political study group. If you choose recreation, gain either Carouse 1 or Gambler 1. If you attend a political study group, gain a DM+2 on your next advancement roll in the Navy and roll INT 8+ to gain one of Advocate 1 or Science (history or philosophy) 1.
5	You are assigned to test a new starship or weapon system, which is a prestige project of the Solomani Party. Roll EDU 8+ to gain one level in either Admin or Engineer (any). Gain one Contact at a Party-run corporation or in the Ministry of Science and Technology.
6	Your vessel fights in a notable space engagement. Gain one of Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer 1, Gunner 1, Pilot 1 or Tactics (naval) 1.
7	Life Event. Roll on the Solomani Life Events table on page 136.
8	Your vessel participates in a diplomatic mission. Gain one of Language 1, Recon 1, Diplomacy 1, Steward 1 or a Contact.
9	Your vessel is assigned to a deep space survey mission. Gain Astrogation 1 or Science (any) 1.
10	Your starship is sent on a covert mission into the Imperial space to provide support for Solomani guerrillas. Gain one of Comms 1, Deception 1 or Remote Operations 1.
11	Your commanding officer takes an interest in your career. Either gain Tactics (naval) 1 or take a +4 DM on your next Advancement roll thanks to his aid.
12	You display uncommon valour in a crisis, saving the entire ship. You gain a promotion or commission automatically.

3

SOLSEC

Solomani Security is charged with ensuring the loyalty of the Confederation's population and its adherence to the principles of the Solomani Cause.
Qualification: INT 6+
If you are aged 34 or more: DM-2
Per previous career: DM-1

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:
SolSec Field Agent: You were an open agent of SolSec. Field agents arrest or follow suspects, protect SolSec offices and engage in paramilitary operations.
SolSec Administrator: You were a desk officer, intelligence analyst, technician or administrator supporting SolSec's field agents, monitors and secret agents.
Secret Agent: You were a sleeper agent in deep cover, usually assigned wherever trouble is expected. Choose any career other than SolSec; you automatically qualify for it. Proceed normally through that career but with DM-1 on survival rolls and DM+1 on advancement rolls. You may also change careers voluntarily as usual. If you are ever forced to leave that career or if you attempt to change careers but fail to qualify, it means your cover was blown. Your next career assignment, if you continue, must be as a SolSec administrator or field agent. You automatically qualify. You start at a SolSec rank equal to your sum of career ranks or rank 4, whichever is lower.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT
Field Agent	INT 7+	INT 5+
Secret Agent	Cover career DM-1	Cover career DM+1
Administrator	EDU 5+	INT 7+

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

1D	CASH	OTHER BENEFITS
1	Cr1000	Scientific Equipment
2	Cr2000	INT +1
3	Cr5000	Terran Adventurer Society
4	Cr7500	Weapon
5	Cr10000	Combat Implant
6	Cr25000	SOC +1 or Combat Implant
7	Cr50000	SC Courier

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ADVANCED EDUCATION (MIN. EDU 8)
1	Deception	Electronics (comms)	Advocate
2	DEX +1	Drive	Engineer
3	END +1	Flyer	Medic
4	Persuade	Gun Combat	Electronics
5	INT +1	Investigate	Pilot
6	Gun Combat	Electronics (computers)	Science (psychology)
1D	**FIELD AGENT**	**ADMINISTRATION**	
1	Vacc Suit	Admin	—
2	Explosives	Advocate	—
3	Gun Combat	Electronics (computers)	—
4	Recon	Diplomat	—
5	Stealth	Investigate	—
6	Athletics	Science (psychology)	

RANKS AND BENEFITS

RANK		SKILL OR BENEFIT
0	Rookie	—
1	Lieutenant	Electronics (computers) 1
2	Captain	Leadership 1
3	Major	Deception 1
4	Lieutenant Colonel	SOC 9 or SOC +1, whichever is higher
5	Colonel	Admin 1
6	Coordinator General	SOC 11 or SOC +1, whichever is higher

Term Limits: Regulations limit agents to no more than four terms as field or secret agents. After this, Travellers must either transfer to administration or leave SolSec. Agents who leave are encouraged to become monitors.

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Severely injured in action. Roll twice on the Injury table.
2	A covert mission into the Imperium is betrayed. You are arrested and put on show trial as a spy. You must take the Prisoner career in your next term.
3	You become close to the target of your investigation and choose to protect them rather than complete the mission. Gain an Ally and an Enemy.
4	During an intense mission you disobey orders and go rogue, completing the operation but incurring the wrath of your superiors. You are reduced one rank.
5	You learn something you should not know and people, possibly in your own agency, want to kill you for it. Gain an Enemy and Deception 1.
6	Injured in action. Roll once on the Injury table.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table but you are not expelled from the career.
3	You are assigned to a risky paramilitary operation in support of brave Solomani guerrillas in the occupied systems. Roll INT 7+; if you succeed, increase one of these skills by one level: Explosives, Pilot (small craft or spacecraft) or Tactics (any). If you fail, roll once on the Injury table.
4	You become emotionally involved with a monitor agent you recruited. Add them as an Ally but the strain of covering up your involvement interferes with your promotion: suffer DM-1 to your next advancement roll.
5	You are saddled with a desk job organising SolSec monitor computer files. Roll Admin, Electronics (computers) or Investigate 8+. If you succeed, you uncover overlooked evidence that sheds new light on an old case. Add DM+1 to your next advancement roll and increase the skill you used by one level.
6	You undergo advanced tactical training. Roll EDU 8+ to increase one of Gun Combat, Explosives, Recon or Tactics (military) skill by one level.
7	Life Event. Roll on the Solomani Life Events table on page 136.
8	An acquaintance says or does something that could get them arrested. You may report them and receive a commendation for your loyalty (DM+2 on your next advancement roll) or cover for them (gaining them as an Ally).
9	You risk your career to press for the investigation of a senior Solomani Party member you believe is betraying the Cause. Roll Electronics (comms) or Investigate 8+; if you succeed, your evidence leads to their arrest. If you fail, gain an Enemy.
10	An investigation into links between organised crime and corrupt Solomani Party officials requires a joint operation with local law enforcement. Gain one Contact in a world's police force or the Solomani Ministry of Justice. Roll EDU 8+ to add one to either your Investigate or Streetwise skill.
11	The actions of Solomani terrorists threaten delicate negotiations with the Imperium. Stopping them requires cooperation with your counterparts in Imperial Intelligence. Roll Carouse, Diplomat or Persuade 8+ to manage the delicate relationship; if you succeed, earn their respect and gain a Contact at an Imperial spy agency. If you fail, gain a Rival.
12	Your efforts expose a major conspiracy against the Solomani Confederation. You are automatically promoted.

Solomani Life Events

2D	Event	Details
2	Illness or Accident	You suffer a serious injury or sickness. Roll on the Injury Chart.
3	Sleeper Agent	Someone you know turns out to be a SolSec agent. This might be useful or detrimental to you, or just something you know that other people do not. Any one of your Contacts, Allies, Rivals or Enemies can be the agent. If you have none, gain a Contact who is an undercover SolSec agent. They may or may not be aware you know of their status.
4	Disastrous Relationship	A friendship, professional relationship or romance comes to an abrupt and unpleasant end. Gain a Rival or an Enemy.
5	Improved Relationship	Your relationship with a Contact becomes closer or more permanent. Any of your Contacts can be upgraded to Ally. If you have no Contacts, you gain one
6	New Relationship	You begin a romantic relationship or friendship. If it works out (your choice) you are still in the relationship and you have an Ally. If not, you are still in touch. You have a Contact with some complicated emotional baggage.
7	New Contact	You gain a new Contact
8	Informed On	Someone reported you to SolSec for something you may or may not have done or said. One of your Friends or Contacts becomes an Enemy
9	The Party Approves!	Your actions have pleased the local Solomani Party officials. You may gain DM+2 on your next Qualification roll, or gain a Contact who is a mid-level Party official.
10	Fortunate Citizen	You have a run of good luck, allowing you to gain DM+2 on any one Benefit roll.
11	Investigated	SolSec arrests you on charges of sedition and anti-Solomani activities. If you are guilty, spend your next term as a Prisoner. If you are not, lose D3 Benefit rolls due to the expense of proving it.
12	The Party Needs You	You are asked by SolSec or a Party official to undertake a special task. If you agree to make the Confederation that little bit safer you gain an Ally high up in SolSec or the Party and are automatically promoted next term, though that is obviously not connected to this matter. If you decline, you are grudgingly paid hush money equivalent to one extra Benefit roll and gain a Rival in the form of a SolSec agent tasked with watching for further disloyalty on your part.

MUSTERING OUT BENEFITS

The following changes and special notes apply to Solomani Confederation Travellers.

Retirement Pay

Retirement Pay in the Confederation is only half what is in the Imperium. The exception is service in the Solomani Party or in SolSec, which provides the full pension. Pensions may be collected at Class A or B starports within the Solomani Confederation. SolSec may also collect pensions at Class C starports; their offices are everywhere. Individuals caught passing as racial Solomani during a career lose this pension.

Anagathics: The Solomani Confederation lacks the technology to manufacture anagathics. Solomani may only begin taking anagathics if they have the Party connections to acquire imported anagathics, which requires SOC 11+.

SC Courier: This is a small fast starship that is placed at the deposal of SolSec or Party officials for promoting the Solomani Cause. Fuel and maintenance are available for free at Solomani naval bases. An additional budget of up to Cr10000 per month is also available to pay for crew and life support expenses. All unused budget funds revert to the Solomani treasury. The ship is provided with few strings attached but it remains the property of the Solomani Party or SolSec. The Traveller may be asked by the SolSec or the Party to perform diplomatic or fact-finding missions on occasion. Should they ever demonstrate disloyalty to the Cause, SolSec will make an effort to retrieve the vessel. Multiple rolls of SC Courier instead add a further Cr10000 per month to the upkeep budget.

Travellers who receive an SC Courier may instead take a standard Type S Scout/Courier from the *Traveller Core Rulebook.*

Terran Adventurers' Society: Travellers' Aid Society hostels and operations in the Solomani Confederation were taken over by the Solomani Party in 870. They became the Terran Adventurers' Society, a similar organisation whose membership is open only to racial Solomani. Membership can be purchased as usual but it is also used to reward loyalty to the Solomani Cause.

If a Solomani Traveller's career would grant Travellers' Aid Society membership it instead grants membership in the Terran Adventurers' Society, provided they are racial Solomani or passing as such. If that Traveller is not, they do not receive membership and are instead rewarded with 2D travel vouchers each redeemable at any Class A or B starport for Cr1000 toward the cost of an interstellar passage.

Terran Adventurers' Society members receive a subscription to Rising Phoenix News Service. RPNS provides up to date reports focused on the Solomani Sphere. Its business news and economic forecasts are of a high quality. General news is good but political reporting follows the Party line.

CONTACTS, ALLIES, RIVALS AND ENEMIES

Roll a D66 to generate random individuals for an encounter specific to Solomani Confederation space.

Solomani Contacts, Allies, Rivals and Enemies

D66	Personage
11	Alien Ambassador or Trade Delegate
12	Army Officer, Solomani Confederation
13	Artist or Performer
14	Colonist or Farmer
15	Confederation Ministry Bureaucrat
16	Conspirator or Terrorist
21	Corporate Executive
22	Corporate or Foreign Agent
23	Criminal
24	Crusading Journalist
25	Diplomat from Foreign Ministry
26	Dissident
31	Entrepreneur
32	Explorer
33	Free Trader
34	Inveterate Gambler
35	Marine, Confederation Navy
36	Navy Officer, Solomani Confederation
41	Physician
42	Planetary Solomani Party Official
43	Police Officer
44	Prindig Worker
45	Private Investigator
46	Racist Thug
51	Religious Leader
52	Researcher
53	Retired Confederation Navy Admiral
54	Scientist
55	Secretariat Delegate
56	Smuggler
61	Solomani Party Militant
62	SolSec Field Agent
63	SolSec Monitor or Secret Agent; roll again for day job
64	Starport Administrator
65	Tourist
66	Uplifted Dolphin or Ape

CHAPTER - TWELVE

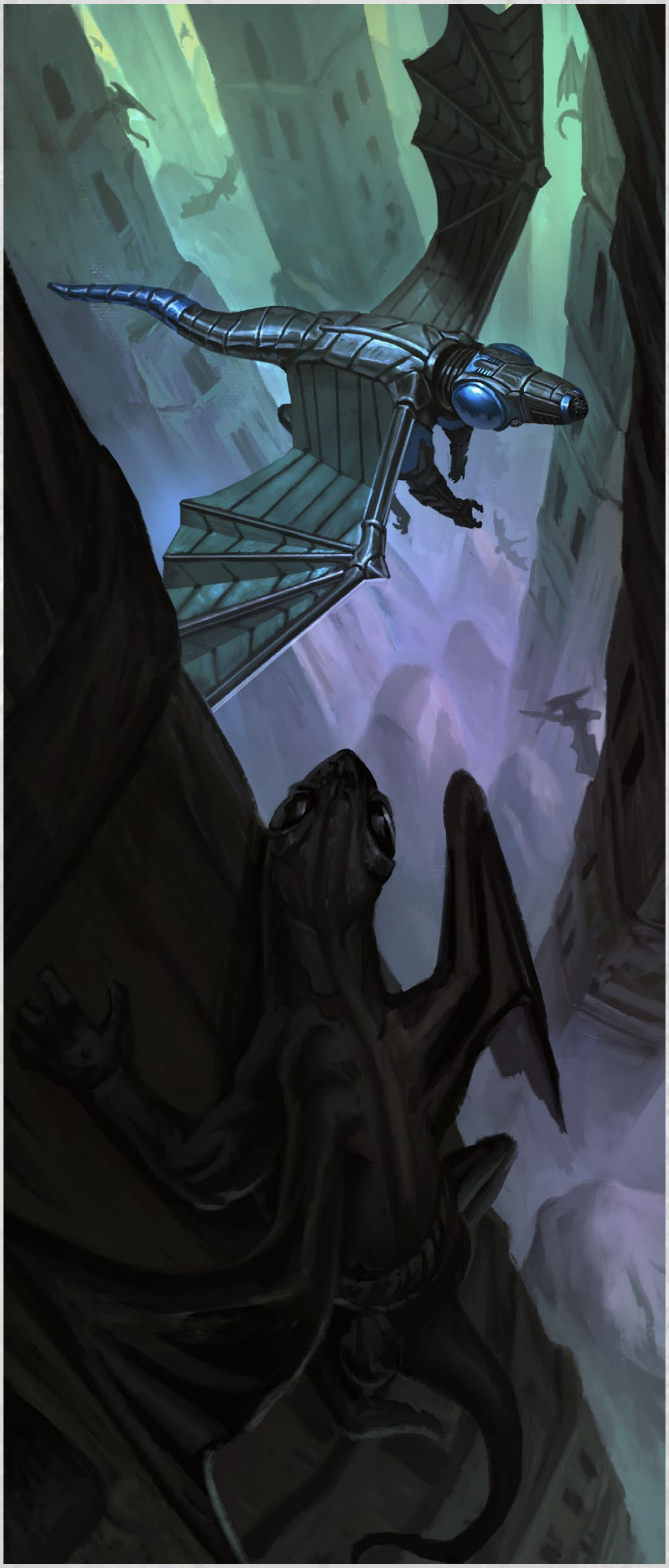
THE DROYNE

The Droyne are an intelligent race with multiple castes. These display significant physical and psychological differences but share a common body type with characteristics similar to both reptiles and birds. Most are quite small and delicate, standing around one metre tall but some castes are larger and more heavily built. With hollow, bird-like bones even the largest Droyne is still lighter and weaker than an equivalent human. Droyne as a species range from one to two metres tall and 25–50 kilograms in body mass but variation within each caste is smaller.

All castes are similar, displaying bilateral symmetry and the same layout of body parts. Droyne have the same greyish skin tone, although this is overlaid with black markings that vary from one individual to another but follow patterns based upon caste. Droyne have two legs, two arms and a pair of wings. These vary in size; in some Droyne they are large enough to allow flight in suitable conditions; in other cases the wings are vestigial. Even then, they assist in balance when carrying out complex movements. Wing size variation occurs across all castes.

Droyne hands and feet consist of four digits. The four long fingers of the hands are all mutually opposable, effectively giving a Droyne as many thumbs as it needs. Three of the foot digits are developed as clawed toes, with the fourth taking the form of a bony spur that can be used in combat. Eyes are large and compound, giving a wider field of vision than a human. Droyne also have a high potential for psionic powers and development of these abilities is threaded through all aspects of their society.

The Droyne presented something of an enigma when they were first encountered and learning about them has tended to produce more questions than answers. It is now widely believed that the mysterious Ancients were Droyne but this is not as simple as it sounds. It may be that the culture known as the Ancients were Droyne but it does not necessarily follow that all Droyne were Ancients. Indeed, the Ancients are known to have taken other species, including humans, to serve or work alongside them. Could some of these 'servitor peoples' have been



sufficiently part of the Ancients' society that they, too, can be considered Ancients? Scientists continue to study the Droyne in the hope of learning more about the Ancients, whilst at the same time trying to understand this puzzling species.

There are Droyne communities all across Charted Space and perhaps beyond. They vary widely, with some populations apparently content to live a simple, pastoral life and others roaming the stars in advanced ships. There are cultural similarities between all groups and they share a common language. This is known as Oynprith and displays virtually no variation between communities separated by hundreds of parsecs and – in some cases – thousands of years. It is believed that at least some of these communities have had no contact with other Droyne for millennia, yet the linguistic and cultural drift that would be expected has not occurred. Ancients sites also include writings in Oynprith that can be read by a modern user of the language.

The original homeworld of the Droyne has never been discovered by humans, although there are candidates within Charted Space. Among these is Andor, in the Spinward Marches, which has ideal conditions for the development of a race like the Droyne. The usual assumption is that the homeworld of the Droyne is the homeworld of the Ancients and if the connection between the two is correct then this assumption is reasonable. However, the Ancients were a culture whereas the Droyne are a race. It may be that the Ancients arose elsewhere among a people who had moved on from their original homeworld. Be that as it may, the Droyne name for their world of origin is Eskayloyt, which is usually translated as 'lost home'.

It is generally assumed that the Droyne themselves may not know where they originated but Eskayloyt may have been 'lost' in some other context, taken over by another species, destroyed in the Final War that ended the Ancients' civilisation... or perhaps not so much lost as 'removed from memory'. There are many who believe the Droyne know more than they are telling and that the location of their homeworld is known to at least some of them. This raises questions about what the Droyne might be planning or what they may fear but as usual the Droyne themselves remain enigmatic.

If there is one feature if the Droyne that stands out above all else it is that they are mysterious. They do not offer an explanation of what they are doing and why, or at least none that can be understood or even recognised by outsiders. They engage in conduct that does not make sense from another race's perspective, often carrying out actions that seem to have no benefit for them or which represent a needlessly convoluted way of going about a simple task. Some of their actions make no sense at all and appear to be completely random. Yet there must be a plan or purpose; no species creates an advanced starfaring society without some rhyme or reason to their actions.

What Do We Really Know?

All data presented about the Droyne is based upon observation and research. Some of it can be considered reliable, such as the height of a typical Warrior or other directly observable data. However, most of what is 'known' is in fact supposition or extrapolation from observations and may be true only in some cases or entirely mistaken. Thus it is possible for a group of Droyne to deviate considerably from what is presented here.

However, there must be some rationale for any given set of circumstances. A Droyne society may not make any sense to outside observers but there must be reasons for everything. The Referee needs to consider the implications of any deviation from what is thought to be true by human scientists. The Droyne are enigmatic but not weird for the sake of it.

CHAPTER - THIRTEEN

A HISTORY OF THE DROYNE

The Droyne probably evolved on a world orbiting an F2 to F7 star, supposition is based on observed preferences for quality of natural light and the sort of planets that might form around such a star. Their homeworld was probably similar to Terra but with a warmer average climate. This world is commonly referred to as Droynia but is more correctly named Eskayloyt, or 'Lost Home'. The legend of Eskayloyt occurs independently among Droyne found on Andor in the Spinward Marches, Zeen in Deneb and Auitawry in the Trojan Reach. However, none of the legends provide much in the way of clues to the location of the world.

The Droyne homeworld might be tens of thousands of parsecs away or it might have become unrecognisable. Natural disaster is a possibility and the Final War that destroyed the Ancients' civilisation could have obliterated the homeworld. Wilder hypotheses suggest that Droynia was somehow transformed and is no longer recognisable, that it was moved into a pocket universe or parallel dimension, or that the Droyne evolved on Earth from the dinosaurs and somehow left behind no traces to be found. This is rather unlikely, since centuries of fossil-hunting have produced absolutely no indications of proto-Droyne on any known world. A fossil record might be missed if the homeworld were now an asteroid belt or was buried under tons of ice but the lack of fossil finds on long-inhabited planets safely rules out the possibility that the Droyne bequeathed their homeworld to humans or another intelligent species.

Wherever they evolved, it is likely the Droyne were not the only species to evolve a caste system. Initially this was specialisation in animals rather than a social organisation but it fulfilled the same function. The proto-Droyne were amphibians who moved into the forest floors and eventually took to nesting in the treetops. Wings evolved, allowing flight or at least a directed jump and glide from higher points to lower ones. At this point the proto-Droyne had three castes; one that hunted and defended the group, one that built and tended the nest and another that produced and nurtured the young.

As climate change replaced vast forests with plains, proto-Droyne populations were isolated from one another in the remaining forests. As with many other species, the fight to adapt and survive produced greater intelligence and ultimately self-awareness. A sub-caste of hunter appeared, with greater intelligence and leadership abilities and eventually became the modern Leader caste. Dedicated Warriors also emerged from the original hunter caste, taking on new roles as protectors of the Leaders as well as defending the group as a while. Sports also appeared, originally as something between a hunter, leader and warrior who could act as a scout or emissary between one group and another.

The original hunters ceased to exist as a caste; their roles were taken on by the new castes in a more specialised manner, with Leaders directing Droyne society. Likewise the nest-builders evolved into more specialised Workers. These included builders and agricultural workers as society moved to a settled agrarian lifestyle and began to build homes at ground levels. As metalworking and technology developed the Technician caste also emerged and the nest-builder disappeared.

This process took millions of years and even once technology was available the Droyne were content to live pastoral lives. They made the tools they needed and traded with other groups for any surplus they might hav but apparently had no desire to 'progress' in the usual sense or to build great empires.

THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD

Little is known for sure about the Droyne prehistoric period, which is generally assumed to have lasted from the emergence of physically modern Droyne to around -350,000. Most of what is known comes from research undertaken on Zhadant, homeworld of the Zhdant people. This is by its nature incomplete, as the Zhodani were researching the remains of a Droyne culture on Viepchakl – their world's moon – rather than the homeworld of the Droyne. There is also the possibility that the Zhodani, who seem to have an affinity for the Droyne, have not revealed everything they learned.

It appears that the Droyne began to emerge as an intelligent species around 3,000,000 years ago and progressed slowly for most of that time. By -500,000 all the modern castes had appeared and the population had largely coalesced into city-states with a population of about one million. These were separated by wide buffer zones but inevitably conflict between city-states occurred.

At first the wars were minor and sporadic but as they became more common there was a steady drive towards progress. After 10,000 years or so from the appearance of the first cities, Droyne technology had reached TL5. This pace was glacially slow by the standards of most other races but sufficient that wars had become very destructive. They were still relatively rare but since war generally meant ruin for both sides an alternative began to emerge. Conflict was ritualised by -470,000, involving only Workers and Warriors. A city might be weakened by losses but with its leadership and breeding population intact it would survive.

The ritualisation of warfare reduced the pressure to advance and adapt, and indeed may have promoted technological stagnation. Droyne society entered what is generally known as the Long Plateau, remaining at TL5 for millennia. It is not clear exactly when the plateau ended but when it did there was a rapid surge forward. This was due to a totally new factor in Droyne society and gave rise to the culture known today as the Ancients.

RISE OF THE ANCIENTS

The sudden advance of the Droyne probably began around -350,000. What evidence has been found is confusing and often contradictory, and the situation is further complicated by other factors. The Ancients used other species as servitors or perhaps allies, so some finds of Ancients sites or relics have been misidentified. The wide spread of Ancients sites also caused some to be identified as other cultures. A desire for secrecy and to obtain advantages has led to much information being suppressed. The result is that little is known for sure about the Ancients and much of what is 'known' has later turned out to be wrong.

The rise of the Ancients is attributed to a single individual, known as Yaskoydray or 'Grandfather'. Apparently Yaskoydray was a mutant, a super-genius whose abilities far surpassed those of even the most capable ordinary Droyne. His appearance has been dated variously to around -310,000 to -300,000. At that time the Droyne were progressing relatively quickly and had developed a TL10 society, although the jump drive had not yet been invented.

It is not clear why the Droyne of that era had begun to advance but they launched sublight exploration and colonisation missions to nearby star systems. Yaskoydray was not impressed with these achievements; he had both intellect and drive, and he used both with gusto. Having made himself immortal and taken control of his homeworld, Yaskoydray produced 20 children. Each of these had 20 of their own, creating a super-intelligent elite to run Droyne society.

Yaskoydray developed the jump drive and sent his descendants out to explore the universe along with favoured groups of ordinary Droyne. Their collective culture is today known as the Ancients and they achieved wonders. Voyaging tremendous distances they learned secrets of the universe by observation and experimentation. Some of the experiments were biological, uplifting primitive species to create servitors for the Ancients. Others were subtle, creating new materials or advancing Yaskoydray's understanding of the universe a little more. Some projects were grandiose, such as moving entire planets to create a rosette of habitable worlds or modifying others to make them more suitable for colonisation.

The Ancients spread out across the galaxy, voyaging far from what is now Charted Space. They attained a level of technology almost unimaginable to modern people. It is widely thought that their population was rather low, although this may have been because the major population centres were destroyed. The small-population theory regarding the Ancients is supported by an apparent quest to find or create suitable workers. Humans from Earth were promising and seeded on many worlds, sometimes with genetic modification, to create assistants for the Droyne-Ancients. Another Terran species, the wolf, was also selected for this role and uplifted to sentience. Populations of what would be later known as Vargr were seeded to coreward of the human-settled worlds.

It may be that the Ancients culture was an overlay upon that of the Droyne and that most Droyne were not really Ancients – they just worked for them like humans and other species did. Whatever the truth of this, the Droyne were spread to many worlds. Sometimes this was deliberate, with a specific project in mind, but it may be that some Droyne simply settled where they wanted. Yaskoydray and his offspring were busy with their projects; the activities of ordinary Droyne may have been beneath their notice. These scattered Droyne had Ancients technology but their status as 'Ancients' is debatable.

Eventually, Yaskoydray had fulfilled all the ambitions his mighty intellect could conceive. He spent some time touring the galaxy, admiring his own works and those of his offspring. Eventually, he found a new goal, something so important to him that he called all his offspring to help him. It is not known what this goal was but only some of his offspring responded to the call. Whether others were too busy or they actively opposed Grandfather's new plan they omitted or outright refused to muster to take part in it.

Yaskoydray embarked on his goal but encountered resistance from his offspring. It may be that some directly countered his efforts or that their work got in the way of his own. Either way, Grandfather resolved to kill all his children and grandchildren, and began doing so. This ultimately escalated into the Final War that destroyed the Ancients' civilisation.

The war was long and complex, with many factions. Some Ancients sided with Grandfather either wholeheartedly or out of convenience. Others tried to remain neutral or fled rather than fight. Factions fought one another over control of resources they needed to defeat Yaskoydray. Ordinary Droyne and other species were used as disintegrator-fodder by all sides or survived as best they could.

The Final War lasted for around 2,000 years. By the end of it, Grandfather was sure he had eliminated his offspring and crushed all other opposition. Suns had been detonated, planets turned into planetoid belts and even more destructive weapons unleashed. As the surviving Droyne and other races huddled in the darkness of a shattered galaxy, Grandfather disappeared. According to some legends he created a pocket universe for himself and his new robotic servants, although there are some who claim he was killed or left Charted Space.

The 'pocket universe' theory raises another question: If Yaskoydray had eliminated all opposition, why retreat from Charted Space? There are no good answers, although certain Ancients 'experts' claim Yaskoydray discovered something that frightened him so much he hid himself away. Others wonder if he is not working on his great project and will someday return to bring about a golden age of enlightenment – or maybe exterminate everyone in Charted Space.

These questions remain unanswered but in the meantime the surviving Droyne were left leaderless and largely isolated from one another. Some worlds retained a high level of technology but could not maintain the installations and devices of the Ancients in the longer term. Others destroyed or hid them out of fear, especially since a characteristic of the later stages of the war was bombardment of any world with a significant Ancients installation. Some worlds were so damaged the population regressed to barbarism and it is possible that some Droyne groups actually did so by choice.

DECLINE AND RECOVERY

The surviving Droyne communities were largely isolated from one another and followed the same pattern of gradual regression. Those that had not already been blasted back to the stone age lost their technology, with a few scattered exceptions. Droyne became extinct on many of their former worlds. Fossil records from this era indicate that most Droyne communities lost the ability to caste, becoming a generic proto-Droyne. How similar these creatures were to the original pre-proto-Droyne is a matter for conjecture, as is their level of intelligence. It may be that on some worlds at least the Droyne not only lost their technology but also their self-awareness.

The rate of decline was different in various locations but overall it was deepest by around -75,000. By this time there were virtually no Droyne communities with the ability to caste and fewer still with technology above the stone age. By all known principles the Droyne should have become extinct. Instead, a remarkable recovery began on around 20 worlds. This was more or less simultaneous, as far as can be ascertained from archaeological sites and folklore, suggesting an outside influence of some kind.

On the 'recovery worlds' the Droyne suddenly regained the ability to caste. The key to this was a set of golden discs engraved with portentous symbols, known as coyns. The Droyne of the Ancients and pre-Ancients eras had not needed such artificial aids but their use in a mystical ceremony seems to unlock some kind of preconditioning to develop the characteristics of a caste. Perhaps the earlier Droyne had some other method triggered by social factors or a function of the Leader caste.

It is possible that one of the Droyne worlds developed the coyns and rapidly rediscovered space travel, spreading them to other worlds. This would establish the Droyne as a major race by the usual benchmark of having invented the jump drive rather than learning how to construct it from others. It has also been postulated that Ancients technology was pressed into use but this theory has few adherents. Most Droyne were terrified of anything to do with the Ancients, making this unlikely even if they were able to figure out how to use such advanced devices after so many years of barbarism.

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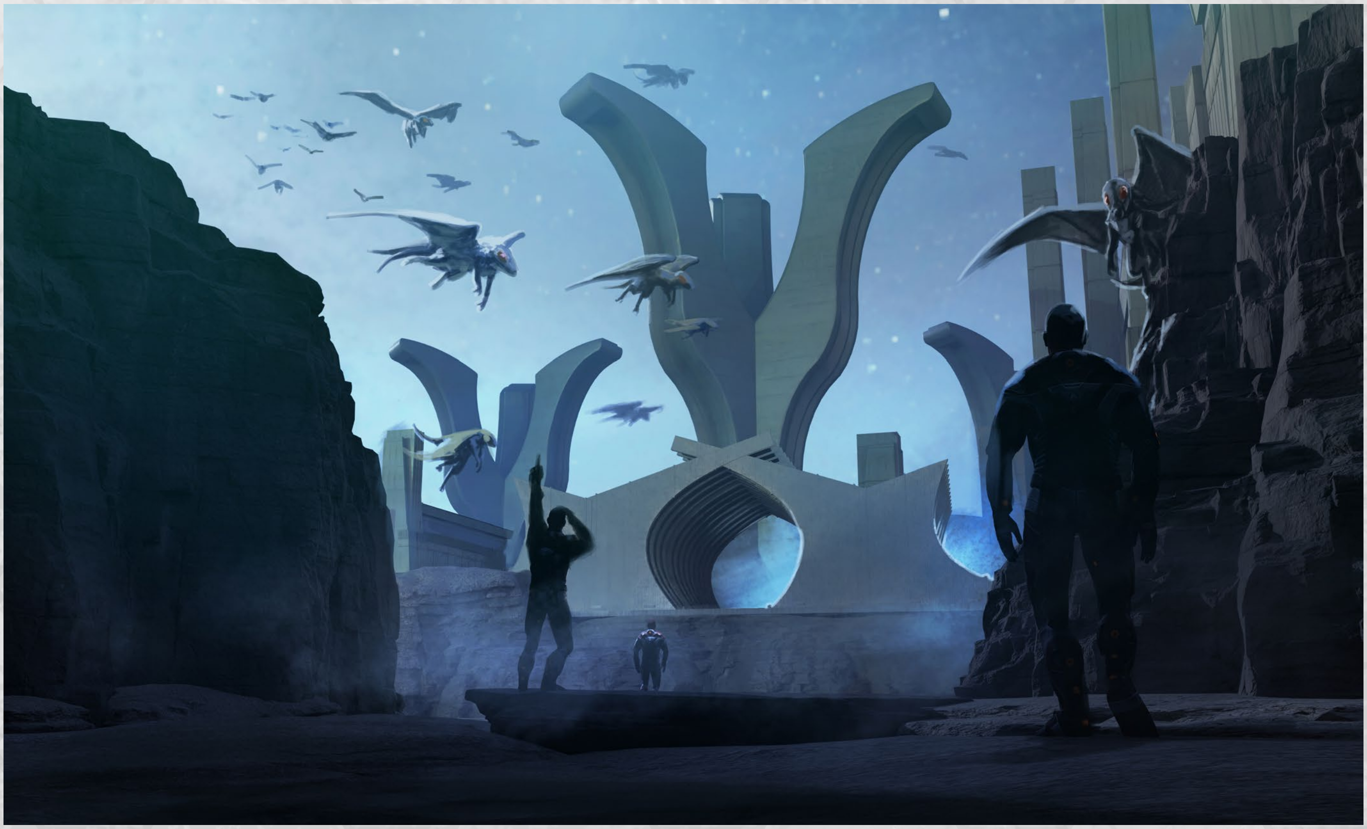
Wacky Droyne Theories: A Solomani Perspective

A popular 'theory' among a certain segment of Solomani society gives the credit for the Droyne renaissance to humans… of course. According to this rather… unconventional… hypothesis, the Ancients left behind a number of small installations on Terra, which were looked after by a highly advanced human civilisation located in the northern latitudes of what is now Eurasia.

As the glaciers began to roll over these regions around 100,000 years ago, the gallant decision was made to abandon them and ensure no traces remained, so that Terran humans could chart their course through the Ice Age without alien technology. Thus the proper and true development of the human race would continue without outside influence. The humans of the time destroyed the Ancients installations and left them in a condition whereby the glaciers would obliterate them, moving south ahead of the advancing ice. By the time it retreated 80,000 years or so later there was nothing left of the installations or the advanced human civilisation that had kept them running and Solomani humans began inventing civilisation from the ground up.

The last act before abandoning the sites was to crew the remaining ships and set out in search of the Droyne. Why the humans would do this is one of the many things this 'theory' does not explain. Nor does it match the archaeological records either from Earth or any Droyne planet. However, adherents will fervently claim that these brave adventurers found the regressed remains of the Droyne and rescued them from extinction.

Thus the coyns are a human invention, created in a bid to save the Droyne and give them back the stars. The fact that there is no evidence whatsoever of any of this and plenty that disproves it, is not enough to dissipate this idea. It has become a folk tale about how the noble proto-Solomani kept the secrets of the Ancients for them as long as they could, then gave them back before nobly reverting to barbarism so they could develop as they should. And that is why Solomani humans are the best of all races, obviously.



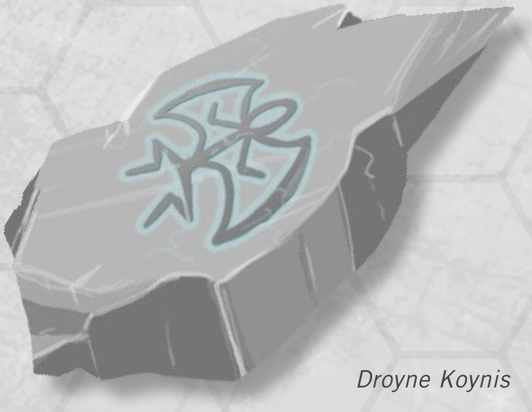
CHAPTER – FOURTEEN

DROYNE, CHIRPERS AND RELATED BEINGS

As already noted, the Droyne evolved from a proto-Droyne creature, then regressed and advanced again. Whether the regression caused by loss of the ability to caste was an evolutionary phase is an open question. It is widely believed that the ability itself was never lost; only the capability to activate it. Thus the uncasted Droyne of the regression period were actually no different in biological terms to those who became before and after.

The situation is further confused by the existence of creatures known to humans as Chirpers due to a sound they make. Chirpers were variously thought to be a totally separate species with similarities to Droyne or a distant cousin of theirs but in recent years it has been discovered that they are more closely related. Chirpers belong to the same genus as Droyne and were native to Eskayloyt. They appear to have been spread throughout Charted Space and beyond by the Ancients; for what reason remains unknown. It appears that Chirpers and proto-Droyne had a common ancestor.

The divergence point might have been the ability to caste; Chirpers are not thought to have this capability. It also seems that whilst Droyne – at least those within Charted Space – have evolved little since they achieved their modern form, Chirpers are capable of greater divergence. Chirper populations on some remote worlds have been observed to differ from the 'interstellar norm', suggesting that they are continuing to evolve and may eventually diverge to a much greater degree.



Droyne Koynis

Wacky Droyne Theories: The Dead End Telepaths

All data presented about the Droyne is based upon observation and research. There is a 'theory', backed by only a few scientists of the fringe sort, that the Droyne are an evolutionary and cultural dead end. They developed the ability to caste and later perfected it. Then they just... stopped. Modern Droyne are not evolving, either culturally or physically and will eventually fall by the wayside. This 'theory' holds that Chirpers are the future of the Droyne family of species, as they will eventually develop past their stagnated cousins.

This idea is based on the concept that the Droyne are somehow 'stuck' in their current form and culture. This is not very scientific but backed up by a capability the Droyne are known to have. Some members of their society have the ability to store tremendous volumes of information passed to them telepathically and to pass it on to a new generation. As a direct result, the Droyne species 'remembers too much' and is somehow unable to move forward. The Droyne subconscious is living in the past and somehow suppressing the ability to change and evolve that most species benefit from.

The means by which this happens must be psionic, so the 'theory' goes. What could halt the progress of an entire species, other than a mysterious and generally misunderstood force? Droyne psionics thus come at the price of dooming their civilisation. And that is why psionics are bad – or so say the adherents of this baseless but surprisingly common belief.

MODERN DROYNE

Modern Droyne society is heavily based around the six castes that now exist. These form not only the fabric of society but also impose physical and mental differences upon the Droyne that enter them. Juvenile Droyne are physically and mentally much the same but as they enter adolescence – typically around age 12 – they undergo a casting ceremony. It is possible that in the distant past this was instigated by the leaders of a community, perhaps by psionic means or a ritualised trigger, but the method was apparently lost. Today, the casting ritual involves the drawing of golden coyns engraved with important symbols. This triggers the casting process within the individual Droyne and also provides a measure of insight into their likely future.

Once casted, Droyne rapidly develop the physical and mental characteristics of their new identity. The mechanism by which they undergo these rapid changes is not known but is probably not esoteric. Droyne development upon casting is fast but not excessively so. What is remarkable is the degree of divergence from the uncasted state that occurs in such a short time.

Modern Droyne Castes

Each caste has three subcastes, creating a specialism in which the Droyne will work for life. Only in a dire emergency will Droyne change subcastes and movement between castes has never been observed.

Leaders (Aykrusk) direct and manage all aspects of Droyne society. Some are specialists, some generalists and some advisors to other leaders. What all have in common is a larger brain case and increased intelligence, which is coupled with enhanced logic and intuition. Leaders are instinctively drawn to decision-making and compelled to take responsibility for their choices. Accountability and transparency are largely unknown in Droyne society, at least in the usual human sense. Instead, Droyne Leaders are accountable to themselves.

The Leader-of-Leaders subcaste forms the uppermost echelon of society in all Droyne communities. A small settlement might have one Leader-of-Leaders; larger groupings might have a hierarchy of subordinate leaders who take charge of specific projects or areas of activity or who advise and support the one in overall charge.

The Priestly Leader subcaste specialises in what might be called spiritual and social aspects of Droyne society. Droyne do not have a religion as such but their lives are filled with many rituals of social significance. These are presided over by the Priestly Leader caste.

The Military Leader subcaste is responsible for leadership in all forms of conflict. This includes the obvious military forces but also law enforcement, fire and rescue services. As with other Leader subcastes there will be a hierarchy within an organisation, although it may not be clear to outsiders.

Drones (Aydirsoth) are responsible for bearing young and also have a variety of important supporting roles in society, often acting as middle-management for the Leader caste. In this context the Drones will advise the Leaders on the situation and what outcomes are desirable for the long-term good of the community and the Leaders will then decide what to do. Implementing their decisions may be a matter for less senior Leaders or the Drone caste.

Family Drones bear young and look after them, providing an education into most aspects of Droyne society. Young receive specialist instruction from appropriate caste members when it is time but it is the Family Drones that prepare them to receive it and ensure they know everything necessary to function in Droyne society.

Leadership in Droyne Society

Roles are very clearly defined among the Droyne and micromanagement by higher leaders is rare – it is simply not their function. The level at which any decision is made is clearly understood by everyone involved, without ever being spelled out or written down in a procedural handbook.

For example, the senior Leaders will decide there is to be a feast and take advice on the implications of the event from their subordinate Priestly Leaders. Having decided on what food is to be served, the leaders hand over the task to the Social Drones who source the correct ingredients and ensure the workers prepare them correctly.

As a general rule *what is to be done* comes down from the next layer of leadership above, without instructions on *how it is to be done*. A mid-level Social Drone might decide how to carry out the project at hand, breaking it down into smaller tasks, then give orders on what is to be done to the workers undertaking each of the tasks. They are expected to know how to do what is asked of them, and do not need to be told by someone whose specialist area of expertise is not that specific task. Everyone has a function and knows where that function ends.

Priestly Drones carry out most rituals under the direction of Priestly Leaders and are also repositories for the history of the community. Priestly Drones are thought to have some traits in common with one of the vanished castes of the proto-Droyne, the idiot-savant. These individuals were barely capable of functioning as a person but could recall any fact or piece of information they had ever been taught. Priestly drones do not approach this extreme but their powers of recall are legendary.

Social Drones are the mid-level managers and facilitators of Droyne society. The lowest echelons of this caste are little more than errand-runners whilst the senior members make most of the minor day-to-day decisions under the overall guidance of the Leader caste.

Workers (Aydin) are the least intelligent and – not coincidentally – the most docile of all Droyne castes. Their function is to labour and to provide semi-skilled assistance to other castes – and to be content to do it. They have little imagination beyond figuring out how to complete their tasks. Those involved in hard physical work can be quite large, standing up to two metres tall, whilst others are small and wiry. In any Droyne community there will be Workers going about all manner of tasks and they will generally ignore outsiders. They are not robots; they are perfectly aware of the interruption and will react if necessary such as to take cover from an attack. However, Workers also know that it is not correct to interfere with what a Worker is doing; the correct approach is to speak to the supervising Leader, Drone or Technician. Those who take an incorrect approach are of no consequence and will just have to wait until the correct person notices them and takes action. In short, Workers work. All other considerations are outside their remit.

The Farming Worker subcaste is involved in all aspects of food production and preparation. In the latter role they are usually assistants to a technician rather than taking the lead.

The Labouring Worker subcaste provides manual labour under the direction of other castes, as might be expected. However, not all members of this caste are dumb hunks of muscle. Labouring Workers include receptionists, clerks and all manner of others who provide ‘light’ support to other castes. Those employed in this manner tend to be smaller and smarter than the more physical workers.

The Building Worker subcaste exists mainly to assist Technicians. In addition to providing muscle power they are usually skilled in a particular role. Building Worker tasks include driving vehicles, laying power cables and other fairly skilled occupations. Like other workers, their low intellect manifests as a lack of imagination or interest in anything beyond their job rather than complete stupidity.

Warriors (Aydih) tend to be larger and stronger than most other castes, sometimes reaching a height of two metres. They are intelligent and imaginative enough to make tactical decisions but are not greatly concerned with strategy. Leaders decide what is to be achieved and the warriors figure out how to make it happen.

The Battling Warrior subcaste specialises in direct combat and security. Battling Warriors make up the bulk of security forces as well as the direct-combat elements of the military.

Guard Warriors have a variety of defensive and protective roles. Where Battling Warriors are primarily concerned with destroying the enemy, Guard Warriors protect the community first and foremost. They can be found in combat roles but also as firefighters and emergency medical personnel.

Each According to its Nature

The subcaste a Droyne belongs to directs its thinking to a degree not seen in most other species. For example, if a security detail accompanying a Leader comes under attack the Battling Warriors will immediately engage the enemy whilst the Guard Warriors will be primarily concerned with protecting the Leader. They will give body cover, look around for somewhere to shelter and rush their Leader to it. Meanwhile the Voyaging Warriors will be seeking an escape route, vehicle or a means to outflank the attackers.

This is not taken to ridiculous extremes – of course a Guard Warrior will shoot at the attackers but destroying them is the priority of the Battling Warriors. The teamwork is a marvel to behold; the Battling Warriors know they are free to engage the enemy and crush the threat because the Guard Warriors will do their part in keeping the Leader alive. The Battling Warriors will make local tactical movements but will not go dashing off to the flank because they know a Voyaging Warrior will be doing that. A well-trained military team from another species can come close to this level of cooperation but it is the caste system that allows the Droyne to perfect it.

The Voyaging Warrior subcaste specialises in dangerous roles that may require movement or travel. Traditionally this meant scouts, light infantry and maritime combat personnel but in a starfaring society Voyaging Warriors are likely to be found as warship crewmembers.

Technicians (Ayssath) tend to be small but highly dextrous and agile. They are skilled and clever within their field of expertise but lack ambition or curiosity outside it. Innovation comes from a team of Technicians directed by a Leader. Without that leadership the Technicians will fix problems as they arise but may not be proactive. For example, a band of Technicians left leaderless for some reason in an installation where systems are failing will fix them in a sensible order but may not be proactive about gathering materials or making a plan to deal with the overall problem.

Fixing Technicians are responsible for the maintenance and repair of all systems and equipment, whether large and simple or tiny and sophisticated. They are not creative, so will put a broken device back together as close as possible to its original condition even if it could have been improved or modified during the process.

The Artificer subcaste create new devices and means of fulfilling the needs of the community. This includes equipment, structures, computer software, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Like Fixing Technicians, they are not creative. Artificers will closely follow a brief given to them by their Leader, ignoring interesting spinoffs and additional applications.

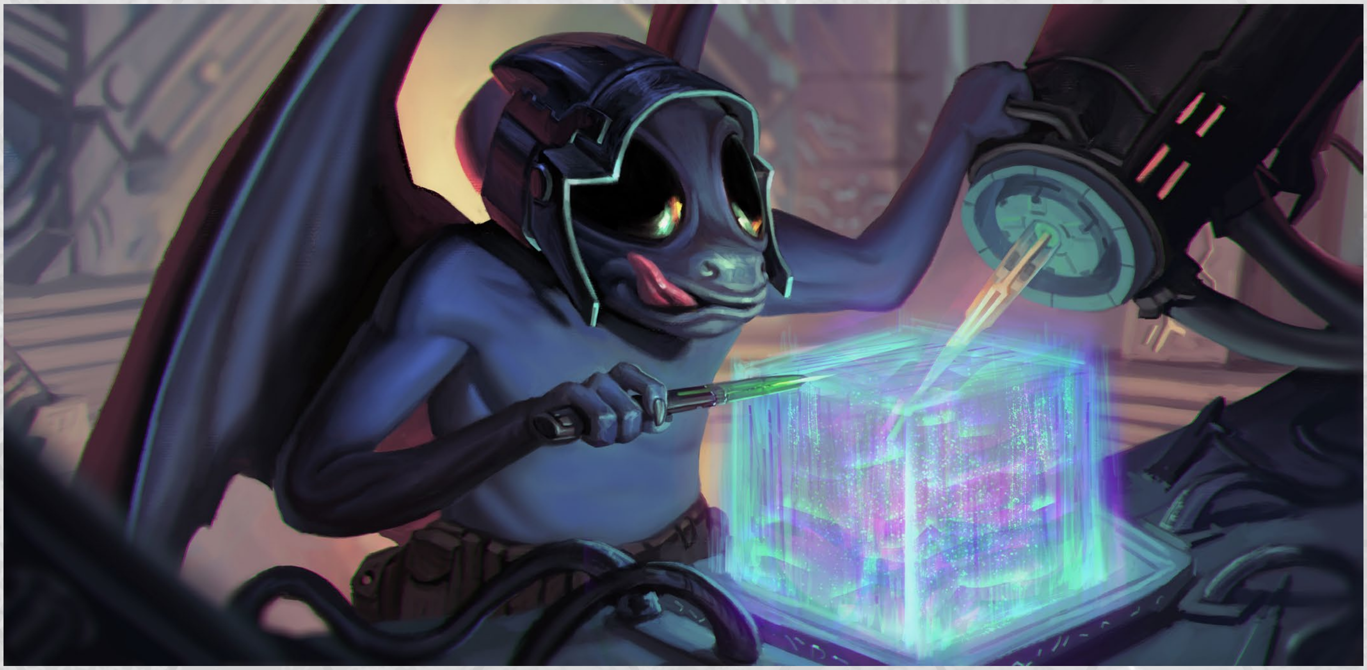
Dreaming Technicians are the most creative of all non-Leaders. They are scientists and researchers in many fields or in some cases problem-solvers. These individuals will be directed to think through a problem and suggest courses of action to their Leaders, along with their likely consequences.

Sports (Praytsirv) are something of an exception to the Droyne societal norms. All other castes require the presence of other Droyne to create a mutually supporting community but a Sport can function away from it for extended periods. They still need a community; their existence would be pointless without one to serve. However, they are the only Droyne who can stand to be away from their kind for any length of time. Sports typically act as agents and messengers, and need little oversight from their Leaders.

Finding Sports serve their community by finding whatever its leaders need. This is typically resources but they can be ‘found’ by a variety of means. Some Finding Sports are prospectors, others traders. Some are generalists who can be assigned a task and left to use their initiative about how to accomplish it.

Speaker Sports are diplomats, emissaries and messengers. Like other members of their caste they have considerable initiative and creativity by Droyne standards.

Seeking Sports range far from their home community. They may be explorers, scouts, spies or agents sent to cause problems for other groups.



Groups, Not Individuals

An individual Droyne is not very creative and lacks initiative but a group of Droyne can be a powerhouse of ideas and action. The unique way Droyne society functions makes them collectively more capable than a similarly sized group of less organised beings but if a community is disrupted its efforts can be feeble.

The normal process when a problem occurs is that a Leader decides it must be solved and consults a Dreaming Technician for suggestions on how to go about it. The Leader then picks the best option and orders a group to carry it out. This might be a mix of castes or a team of Warriors, Technicians or Workers depending on the circumstances. A Drone might manage some or all aspects of the task, whilst Sports are sent to obtain any assistance or knowledge that might be required.

When it functions smoothly this arrangement is extremely efficient. If the Drone were unable to provide mid-level guidance the whole effort could fall apart. Droyne are well aware of this and routinely send Sports to disrupt the activities of rivals by interfering at just the right time and place.

THE ROLE OF RITUAL

Droyne daily life is heavily ritualised, although it is not always clear what is a ritual and what is simply the standard way of carrying out a task. The Droyne do not have a religion as such, although the attitude of some groups towards Yaskoydray and any remnant of the Ancients culture appears to border upon worship. Other groups are terrified of anything to do with the Ancients and will not mention such things; it is also possible that a form of mystical propitiation takes place. The Droyne themselves do not discuss their religious beliefs and will not confirm they have any.

Some rituals are absolutely essential to Droyne society. Above all is the Iskyar, the casting ritual, without which Droyne society would not exist at all. This is administered by the Priestly Drone subcaste under the direction of the Leaders and appears to trigger latent psionic abilities geared to the development of the young Droyne. It is widely believed that until the casting ritual is carried out, the adolescent Droyne has the potential to develop into a member of any caste. The means by which the individual's rapid development takes place after the ritual is unknown but thought to be directed by the individual's own psionic abilities, even if it has no other powers. No biological triggers or control mechanisms have been found, although little research has been possible in this field.

If a Droyne passes the correct age without undergoing the Iskyar casting ritual they will eventually begin to develop into an adult, gaining the characteristics of a male or female without the accompanying caste characteristics. Thus failure to carry out the ritual for several clutches of young Droyne will destroy a community – although the situation would have to be dire for this to happen in the first place.

Many other rituals exist. Some are recognisable as such and can be interpreted by outsiders. There are rituals of preparation for an endeavour or expedition, rituals of recognition where an individual has performed to the level expected of them and rituals of acceptance for a new piece of equipment. The latter has similarities both to a religious service and the naming of a ship in human society; the new item is accepted (or perhaps consecrated) and thereafter is part of the community. Ships, vehicles and scientific instruments are among the objects 'accepted' in this manner. They do not seem to perform any better afterwards but the Droyne seem happier to use them and more possessive.

A version of this ritual has been applied to Ancients artefacts or installations. In general the Droyne have an almost superstitious terror of anything connected with the Ancients and will hide or avoid anything they find. However, after a suitable ritual of acceptance a device or place becomes tolerable to the community. A similar but more personal ritual is used when an important item – particularly a piece of Ancients technology – is given to an individual to use or safeguard. This has been referred to as a 'ritual of permission' by some researchers. It seems that a device can be accepted by the community but only those who have been personally 'attuned' or 'introduced' to it can use it.

Minor ritual-like behaviour can be seen throughout Droyne society. It is thought that the rather strange way Droyne have of approaching mundane tasks may be caused by the incorporation of small daily rituals into the activity. To what purpose this is done remains unclear but the Droyne are a highly psionic race; it may be that going round the houses to accomplish a simple workplace task has some psychological or psionic effect. One promising theory is that ritualised tasks are a form of 'moving meditation' which helps maintain or develop psionic powers.

An alternative theory suggests that in some cases the bizarre behaviour of some Droyne may be the result of mental deficiencies or such a tremendous lack of imagination that they cannot see a simpler and better way of accosting basic tasks. This idea is favoured mainly by those opposed to psionics or who believe the Ancients damaged the Droyne by modifying them. A more moderate viewpoint holds that the apparently ritualised behaviour seen throughout Droyne society is an artefact of the casting process, which forces the individual into a highly rigid way of thinking. If so, then at least some of the odder aspects of Droyne activities are not rituals in the sense of serving a spiritual purpose. Instead they are more like the habitual behaviours associated with some personality disorders.

Wacky Droyne Theories: The Cult of Grandfather

Some 'experts' believe the rituals found throughout Droyne society are all connected with the worship of Yaskoydray in some manner. Even groups who will not speak his name propitiate him using various euphemisms, hoping to prevent his return or at least avoid his wrath. Central to this theory is the idea that Yaskoydray is a god-like figure to the Droyne; one whose power is real and has been graphically demonstrated.

Some go so far as to suggest that many Droyne do not realise they are worshipping Yaskoydray. Each curious little ritual is dedicated to him but the Droyne do not know this. Grandfather has essentially programmed his worship into the daily lives of all Droyne. This conveniently explains why the Droyne often go about simple tasks in an unnecessarily complex manner or sometimes display behaviour that makes no sense to outsiders. However, there is no reason to suppose this theory is any more accurate than other outsiders' guesses about what the Droyne are up to.

UNCASTED DROYNE AND CHIRPERS

Research into the relationship between Chirpers and Droyne has produced two differing theories. One holds that the Chirpers are Droyne who have lost the ability to caste, the other that Chirpers and Droyne share a common ancestor but are not recently related. There is certainly a difference between Chirpers and uncasted Droyne, although there are also many similarities. Both are physically similar to Droyne, typically around one metre tall and 25 kilograms in mass. Intelligence is low in both cases, at best that of a human child with little imagination or capability for abstract thought.

Both Chirpers and uncasted Droyne display similar behaviour. They are generally shy and nervous, with an uncanny ability to hide or disappear when they wish. They have a simple social organisation, entirely suitable for life as hunter/gatherers or undertaking basic agriculture. Their diet is mainly vegetarian but they will take small game or fish when the opportunity arises. Chirpers and uncasted Droyne make and use simple tools and are attracted to shiny objects. They will steal anything they find attractive or interesting, making them potential pests where other cultures are located nearby.

The key difference between uncasted Droyne and Chirpers is that Droyne retain the ability to caste. The offspring of an uncasted community can be put through the Iskyar ritual and will emerge as casted Droyne; Chirpers will not. There are unconfirmed reports that uncasted Droyne can be subjected to a modified version of the Iskyar ritual and will undergo changes but these rarely produce a casted Droyne. Instead the mechanism that produces the rapid changes soon after casting runs wild, creating mental and physical mutations. Most subjects die. Those that do not become deranged or physical monsters; often both.

It is theorised that Chirpers are the natural form of the Droyne and that Droyne communities that lose the ability to caste will gradually revert to being Chirpers over several generations. There may be a mechanism that allows a Chirper community to become Droyne or proto-Droyne but if it exists it is the province of beings like Yaskoydray.

This theory fits with at least some of the biological evidence. It has long been accepted that there must have been some force for increased mutation among the proto-Droyne, perhaps an unusually high level of background radiation on the original Droyne homeworld. If this was in fact a psionically controlled mechanism, initially operating on an instinctive level, that would account for the emergence of the Droyne where conventional theories of evolution cannot.

If this theory is correct, Chirpers are the natural form of the Droyne species. Proto-Droyne and later Droyne emerged as the result of instinctive psionically-driven forced evolution, presumably in response to environmental pressure. Those in which the mutation mechanism was buried too deep to be activated became the Chirpers; those that began to change became Droyne. After the collapse of the Ancients' civilisation, the means to control the forced-evolution mechanism was forgotten but the surviving populations remained as uncasted Droyne. Given enough time they would have reverted to being Chirpers but some intervention took place, giving these populations the ability to activate the forced-evolution mechanism through the Iskyar ritual. Those populations that did not receive the intervention in time became Chirpers.

Some scientists have postulated that a race of 'post-Droyne' might evolve somewhere or that a population of Chirpers might someday evolve full intellect and become a separate race in their own right. There is no evidence for this in Charted Space but rumours are beginning to filter back of long-range expeditions finding different forms of Chirpers and Droyne.

MODERN DROYNE SOCIETY

Modern Droyne society is absolutely dominated by the caste system. The building-block of all communities is a family of at least six individuals, termed a Tyafelm. A Tyafelm must contain at least one Droyne of each caste in order to function and most have several from at least some of the castes. Multiple Workers are common in almost all Tyafelm, with the number from each of the other castes determining whether the Tyafelm has a specialist function or is a general family grouping. Within the Tyafelm, each Droyne has a specific role that cannot be fulfilled by a member of a different caste. If a Tyafelm loses all its members of a particular caste it will either break up and join one or more other families or adopt a Droyne of the appropriate caste.

A grouping of multiple Tyafelm (typically three to twenty) forms a Dreskay, or extended family. The size of a Dreskay typically ranges from around 50 Droyne to 250; larger groupings are rare. Within a Dreskay, one Tyafelm will specialise as the overall leader of the Dreskay and their supporting family members, others will provide general or specialist functions depending on their composition. This arrangement is likely a holdover from the original Droyne society on Eskayloyt.

Dreskayin do occasionally break up, either because they have grown too large or due to insufficient resources. In this case one splinter group may travel far away, ensuring new blood enters the gene pool now and then. A splinter group will always be a full and functional Dreskay in its own right – it may be small but it will be capable of supporting itself. Imbalanced Droyne communities cannot survive and rather than send a doomed group away to fail and die the Dreskay will either continue to support them or instruct members to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the community as a whole. This is one of the reasons a Droyne might perform Krinaytsyu, a form of ritualised suicide.

Multiple Dreskayin form an Oytrip or community. These vary in size and type, although most are pastoral communities whose members contentedly work farms and businesses that support the community as a whole. An Oytrip is well-organised without there appearing to be any structure at all. Everyone has a role and the chain of command is understood almost at a genetic level. Property is passed around as required, although normally it rests with an individual until the Leaders decide someone else needs it.

Members of an Oytrip are cooperative within their home society but Oytripin do sometimes come into conflict. Whilst alliances and cooperation agreements are routinely brokered by Sports acting as emissaries, the Leaders of an Oytrip cannot conceive of being subordinate to anyone else – Leader of Leaders in an Oytrip is the pinnacle of Droyne society. It took a being like Yaskoydray to unify the Droyne under a central authority and without him there is no prospect of it happening again.

The Leader of Leaders in an Oytrip is concerned for their own community above and indeed to the exclusion of all else. This means that negotiations tend to be inflexible and conflict more common than it needs to be. Where two human communities might stop at the brink of war an Oytrip that can take what it needs by force will do so. On the other hand, Warriors fight only to obtain the objectives put forward by their Leaders. Battles are not fought to a bloody conclusion 'to make it mean something' as happens in human conflict far too often; it is either worth fighting or it is not. Once objectives have been attained or are demonstrated to be impossible, the Warriors assume a defensive posture or stand down. Droyne do not fight for hate, revenge or the honour of the flag.

Most conflict is ritualised, with only Warriors as legitimate targets. Warriors do die but the damage caused by the conflict is limited and other functions of the Oytrip largely unimpaired. Support is still provided by Workers, Sports and Technicians; Leaders still make decisions. However in a ritual war only the warriors may be targeted. In a 'real war' the whole Oytrip is a target and attacks to weaken its structure or economic capability are acceptable. Wars with outsiders are always 'real wars' since non-Droyne cannot be expected to honour or even understand the provisions of ritualised war.

Droyne society changes very little, even between populations that have been isolated form one another for millennia. One reason for this is the psionic transmission of information from one generation to another. Some members of the Drone caste have the capability to retain vast amounts of information – essentially the memories of their predecessors. The amount of data they hold is sufficiently distracting that these individuals are often seen as mystics by outsiders, wandering around mumbling or just standing staring into space for hours on end. When a transfer is made, details from long ago are preserved.

Thus the universal Droyne language of Oynprith is passed from one generation to another unchanged. There are other languages in use by Droyne and these have dialects or regional variations – but Oynprith does not. Likewise each generation of Droyne knows exactly how to perform the rituals needed to make society work. This had great benefits but it does mean that society can be slow to change or adapt. Indeed, many researchers believe this transmission of memories and information is the reason Droyne cultures tend to stagnate; their past is still fresh and bright, and as relevant as any idea produced by a Dreaming Technician.

The Kroyloss

The Kroyloss is a uniquely Droyne social institution. Droyne sometimes need to leave their Oytrip but cannot live without the company of others. Even Sports, who can function for an extended period without the proximity of other Droyne, need to know they have a community to serve and eventually go back to. Those cut off from their community usually choose to undergo Krinaytsyu. However, temporary support can be obtained by the formation of a Kroyloss. This is a pseudo-family, or association, of Droyne which exists on a temporary basis. It might be formed specifically to accomplish a task or could be a more or less accidental coming-together of individuals for mutual support.

Newly casted Droyne usually leave their Tyafelm to join another but in most cases this takes place within a Dreskay so is a simple matter of moving from one family to another. Some Droyne engage in a period of seeking and gaining experience, which leads to the formation of a Kroyloss where multiple Droyne act like a family for a time. Eventually, members will join a Tyafelm or the Kroyloss will mature into one; Droyne can only function for a limited time without the support of a properly organised Tyafelm.

Krinaytsyu

Krinaytsyu is a highly honoured ritual in Droyne society. Those who are no longer useful will usually undergo it or a member of a community might be instructed to do so to preserve resources. Those who challenge the judgement of the community's Leaders and are proven wrong will usually undertake the ritual, as will Leaders whose decisions have resulted in disaster. This is not punishment but a pragmatic removal of individuals who can no longer function in the community. It is difficult for outsiders to understand but to a Droyne the community is everything; they cannot leave to find another more to their liking; someone who no longer fits in with their community has no place in the universe.

Krinaytsyu is a painless ritual of meditation, which takes up to six hours. It is quite difficult to perform and cannot be done when there are interruptions. The Droyne can stop at any time if there is suddenly a need for them but the individual will need to suddenly have a strong need to be alive. This would normally occur only if their community needed them; fear of death or a desire to continue experiencing life will not cause a Droyne to halt the process of Krinaytsyu.

THE COYNS AND OTHER PSIONIC TRIGGERS

The coyns are central to many Droyne rituals. They are a set of metal discs, usually of gold, inscribed with portentous symbols. Modern coyn sets typically have 36 pieces but there is some evidence for older sets with 38 or even as many as 42. Each coyn depicts a concept, race or Droyne caste and can be used for a form of divination in a similar manner to playing cards. Coyns are thought to have been introduced into Droyne society to replace some lost process by which adolescent Droyne were assigned a caste.

The coyns can be grouped by what they depict. One group shows the six Droyne castes and is particularly important to the Iskyar ritual since this indicates which caste the adolescent Droyne will develop into. It is not clear whether the drawing of the coyns is random or somehow influenced by the subject of the ritual – or perhaps by the whole community. The coyns seem to be a psionic trigger but it is possible that the adolescent Droyne's subconscious already knows what caste it is to be and psionically influences the coyns to trigger the necessary transformation. Alternatively, the Drones and Leaders of the community might – deliberately or otherwise – guide the coyn selection to create the castes the community needs.

Another group shows the six major races – humans, Vargr, Aslan, Droyne, Hivers and K'Kree – which has caused a great deal of puzzlement among scientists. Major race status is conferred on a species that develops the jump drive unaided but coyns have been discovered showing some of these races before they made the discovery. Indeed, in some cases depiction on coyns dates from a time when the race in question was still just another primitive indigenous species. No satisfactory explanation has ever been put forward for this conundrum.

Other psionic triggers exist within Droyne society. The swirling, apparently abstract artwork associated with Droyne and Ancients sites has a complex meaning to the citizens of the community. It is in part a history of their race and the community in question, in part a map and guidebook to the settlement and perhaps also a 'thought pathway guide' which conditions Droyne to follow the correct ways of thinking and acting. The equivalent in human terms would be for every signpost to contain snippets of historical information and a catchy slogan.

Psionic memory triggers are used throughout Droyne society to convey information or ensure it remains current. Most are superficial, like those noted above, but very important information or events can be recorded in a great work of art. This is often the walls and ceiling of a ceremonial space. A memory trigger of this sort programmes the mind of any Droyne that sees it with images which are then played as if they were personal memories. Information is not conveyed by the art itself; it is conjured up by the Droyne's subconscious in response to the trigger. The Droyne observer does not see a recording of what happened so much as imagines it based upon detailed instructions fed to their subconscious.

This method of conveying information will be highly accurate in the case of Droyne. Some other species, notably those that had contact with the Ancients, have a very small percentage of sensitives who can be triggered by the artworks. Information in this case is not conveyed very accurately; it may be fragmented, distorted or nightmare-like. Indeed, some images may cause confusion, disorientation or terror in sensitives despite the actual content being benign. Important information-bearing artworks of this sort are normally at the heart of a Droyne community, where outsiders are not permitted to go. Their existence is known only to a few researchers who have stumbled upon one in the company of a sensitive whilst exploring a ruin or a wreck. This is rare, to say the least.

Droyne Aesthetics

There are so many different Droyne societies that it is difficult to make generalisations and even where there is general conformity some Oytripin will differ from the norm to a considerable degree. Overall, Droyne equipment and architecture tends towards functional simplicity in terms of structure, with decoration varying depending on the importance of the building or device. A weapon or machinery space will tend to be spartan and possibly rather ugly but a ritual chamber or an area associated with Leaders is likely to be far more attractive. Typically, such areas are laid out with an elegant simplicity, with domed ceilings decorated in subtle patterns. There is an apparent preference for silver, grey and greyish shades of blue and green but brighter colours are associated with some Oytrips.

Droyne apparently make art for practical purposes. It serves as a reminder of their history and the right decoration is necessary to some rituals. There is a psionic component to some Droyne art that has so far eluded the understanding of researchers. The Droyne do not understand music and appear to have no equivalent but they have been observed taking part in some kind of synchronised movement. This falls somewhere between military parade marching, synchronised swimming and dance. Participation can range from two Droyne to tens of thousands. It is not known if this is a recreational pastime or has some ritual significance.

CHAPTER - FITHTEEN

MILITARY AND NAVY

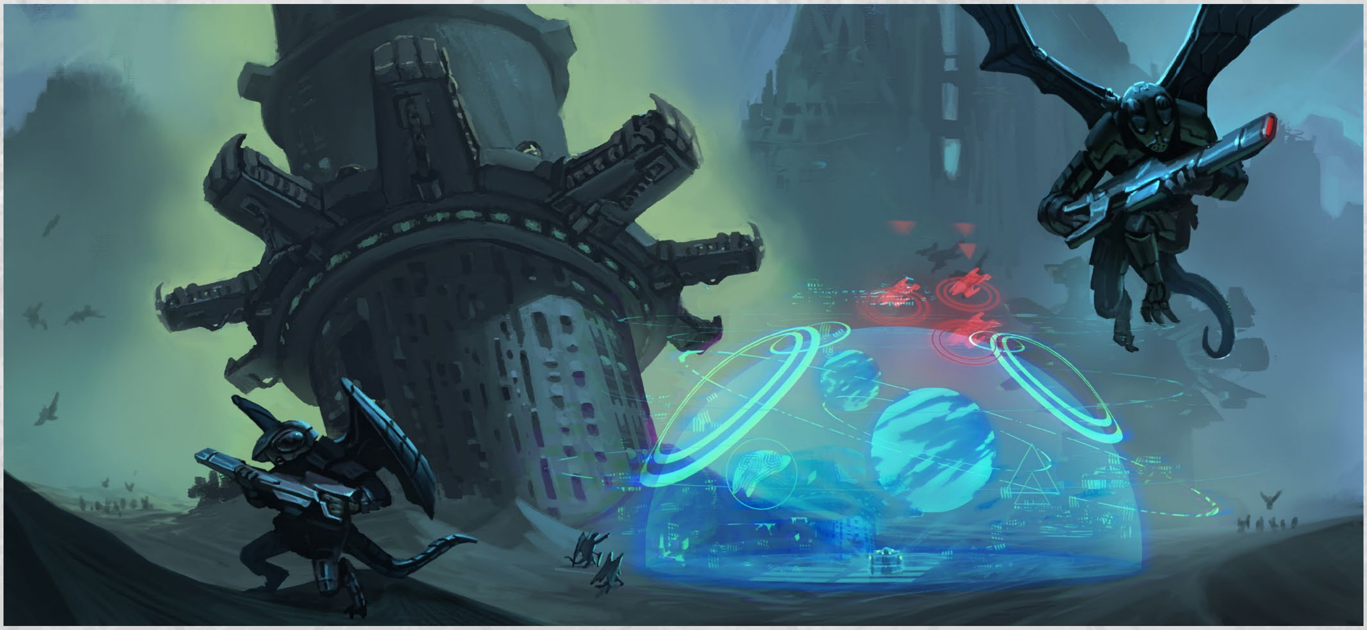
Military and naval forces fielded by Droyne communities vary enormously in terms of the technology available but generally follow a similar organisational pattern whether armed with disintegrator weapons or pointy sticks. Organisation is along similar lines to the rest of Droyne society – Leaders provide overall direction to the Warrior caste, whose senior members decide how to give the Leaders the outcome they desire.

One artefact of this system is a bias towards low-level efficiency. Droyne can be considered warriors rather than soldiers; their fireteams and warbands cooperate well and almost instinctively but lack large-scale organisation or strategic vision. Small units are ferocious, tenacious and smart in combat and do not flinch from taking casualties if the objective is deemed worth it by the commanders. At the same time, 'army level' functions are sometimes rather poor.

In particular logistics, intelligence and technical functions are weak. The body of Workers assigned to support a force will do its job well but may not coordinate properly with the Warriors waiting for resupply. It is not uncommon for supplies to arrive packaged in the most efficient manner possible – for transport – and for the field force to have to waste time waiting for peripheral items to be unpacked and distributed before they can get at the ammunition.

This problem occurs due to over-specialisation and a rigid way of thinking that does not always suit a modern, technological society. The Workers simply cannot understand and plan for the needs of the Warriors and the Leaders are incapable of coordinating the resupply mission because they do not think at the right level. Thus Leaders give the order 'provide the supplies required by the field force at this location and time' and the Warriors provide a list of their needs. The Workers then assemble and deliver the supplies with extreme efficiency in terms of their own task – get these items there, then. The correct items will arrive at the appointed time but they may not be in a condition whereby the Warriors can efficiently bring them into use.

There is no person in Droyne society capable of bridging the gap between Workers and Warriors, nor between any other castes. At very low (and often, very high) Tech Levels this does not matter so much but in the mid-technology band the disconnect can be dangerous. It has been postulated that someday a Sport subcaste might emerge to meet this need. This might be a generalist go-between, a specialist 'interpreter' between two specific castes or even a super-specialist such as a Logistics Officer but there is no reason to suppose it is likely to happen in the near future, if at all.



Similar problems emerge in the intelligence and command-and-control areas. The Sport caste contains individuals well suited to intelligence gathering and even analysis but strategic decisions are made by Leaders-of-Leaders. These individuals deal with the big picture and can incorporate intelligence data into their high-level plans but this does not always translate to best use of the information. There can be a dislocation between the goals set out by high-level Leaders and the plans made and executed by the Leaders-of-Warriors. The larger the forces involved, the greater the disconnect.

Technical functions in the military and naval arena are another problem. Electronic warfare and starship operations are functions best suited to the Technician caste but it is Warriors who fight. Naval ships are crewed by Warriors who may be inefficient at their shipboard tasks. In groundside combat, supporting functions such as electronic warfare are carried out by Technicians in separate units. They may have an escort of Warriors and be armed for self-defence but they are not combat troops. They think in terms of their technical function rather than waging war. Cooperation with the fighting units can be patchy and inefficient.

Droyne are most effective in combat at the very low and very high ends of the technological spectrum, where individual and small-unit capabilities are highly important. They produce poor mass armies at the mid-technology to low-interstellar Tech Levels. The Droyne are aware of their limitations and seek to offset them by playing to their advantages. Thus a Droyne field force typically fights as a collection of small units, each locally very competent. Cooperation is loose and plans are made accordingly. A Leader directing a large force knows that their plan may not be efficiently implemented at a high level but that the Warriors will fight hard and well at the squad and small-unit level.

As a result, Droyne tactics in space and in groundside combat tend to emphasise sharp raids and assaults by small forces rather than large-scale concerted action. This has been described as being pelted with gravel instead of a single rock but it is potent gravel. The situation is often bewildering to commanders who have not fought Droyne before, since any given jab could be the spearhead of a major attack. Indeed, this is how a battle typically develops – a low-level commander achieves success and reports back, and other units are sent to strike at the same point. In this manner the force is ‘pulled forward’ by junior commanders at the front rather than being a carefully aimed thrust directed by the senior Leaders from the rear. An enemy force will be ‘crumbled’ by being hit at many points and the Droyne are not afraid to send some units on suicide attacks into the enemy rear if it will gain a useful advantage. Overall, rather than trying to find the point of decision and strike there, the Droyne will hit their enemies everywhere and shift their reserves to exploit any successes or weak points. Against a well-organised and courageous enemy this method results in high Droyne casualties but it can cause an opposing force with low morale to collapse. Even if it does not, disruption of command and control forces enemy units onto the local defensive rather than supporting one another, bringing about the sort of pell-mell battle in which Droyne Warriors excel.

GROUND FORCES

Ground forces are organised in a similar manner whatever the Tech Level of the parent society. Voyaging Warriors are usually part of a multi-caste group, usually supporting a Leader as drivers or pilots. Guard Warriors are also likely to be found as escorts for a Leader and as protectors of a task-oriented group. They are sometimes formed into an all-Guard Warrior unit either as a defensive asset or as the pivot for a larger force to operate around. Battling Warriors form the vast majority of combat formations, although they can sometimes be encountered as part of a Leader’s entourage. In this role they will execute the Leader’s will or take the fight to the enemy if the Leader comes under attack, whilst Guard Warriors take on a more protective role.

The number six and its multiples are important in all aspects of Droyne culture and groups of Warriors are typically deployed in sixes. Outsiders typically refer to a group of (usually six) Warriors as a warband, which is a reasonable analogy but the traditional Droyne term is a Hunting Party. There is no formal rank structure in a Hunting Party; Warriors cooperate well without any of them being officially in charge. In practice, a small group of Droyne like this will rarely be far from a Leader and can be relied upon to carry out its duties until given something else to do. The degree of intelligence and adaptability shown by the Hunting Party depends on the intellect of its smartest members. Larger or smaller groups can be assigned to a task if necessary but six is the most auspicious number. It seems that Droyne thinking is guided more by this than physical or logistical considerations associated with the task at hand.

The standard tactical unit is made up of multiple Hunting Parties or equivalent formations – usually but not always six. Such a unit is termed a Fighting Group and with a standard composition of 36 personnel can be considered the equivalent of a human platoon. Sometimes a Fighting Group of six Hunting Parties, each of six Warriors, is deployed without any other caste present but if so the unit is expected to be within communication range of a Leader-of-Warriors. More commonly, a Fighting Group will contain different castes.

A force intended to operate as the equivalent of an infantry platoon will normally contain four Hunting Parties, each of six Battling Warriors, plus a Leading Party and a Guarding Party. The latter is made up of Guard Warriors and acts as the point of balance for the unit as a whole. The Guarding Party protects the Leading Party and holds any small terrain objectives that are taken whilst the Hunting Parties manoeuvre more freely. The Leading Party contains a junior Leader-of-Warriors plus supporting personnel. These may be Technicians if there are technical devices to be operated and Workers to dig fortifications or carry supplies. Sports may be present to act as scouts or Guard Warriors to protect the leader and act as medics.

Thus a typical Droyne Fighting Group will consist of 24 Battling Warriors organised into four parties of six and two supporting or guarding parties, also with six members each. This is an ideal organisation and may be incomplete or overstaffed upon occasion. Fighting Groups often operate independently but may be organised at a higher level into a Battling Force. A Battling Force may be composed entirely of Fighting Groups or may contain supporting units of equivalent size.

A Battling Force is always led by a mid-level Leader-of-Warriors. Nominal structure is five ‘teeth’ units and one ‘tail’ unit, although this can vary. ‘Teeth’ units are usually Fighting Groups made up mostly of Battling Warriors but could be equivalent formations made up of Guard Warriors if the formation’s purpose is primarily defensive. A Battling Force has a ‘paper’ strength of 216 Droyne and can be considered the equivalent of a reinforced company in human terms.

Composition of a Battling Force can vary considerably, with various terms applied. For example, a unit intended to carry out field engineering and fortification works might contain six Fighting Group equivalents, each of six Droyne but only one of them might be made up of Warriors. The rest will be Workers or Technicians who will carry out their tasks protected by the Warriors. An aerospace defence unit might have two Fighting Groups of Warriors who man its weapons, one equivalent unit of Guard Warriors who protect the installation, two Fixing Groups of technicians who maintain the site and a Leading Group of various castes who support the installation’s commander.

Larger forces are made up of Battling Forces or equivalently sized formations, usually in groups of six. Such a formation is termed a ‘Regiment’, although the term has different connotations to that in human use. A combat formation would normally be termed a Warring Regiment, with a nominal strength of 1,296 Droyne. A Warring Regiment would be commanded by a mid-level Leader-of-Warriors.

Larger formations are rare in Droyne warfare. If more than one Warring Regiment is deployed they will be commanded separately and will cooperate rather loosely under the overall command of a senior Leader-of-Warriors answering to the community’s Leaders-of-Leaders. It is not uncommon for a Warring Regiment to be supported by various independent Parties, Groups and Forces answering to an overall commander.

The terminology for these formations follows a progression keyed to the number of sub-formations in the unit and also its function:

Party (Eyotwyu) – A grouping of six or so Droyne who have been given a short or long-term task.
Group (Aaumyats) – An organised grouping of six or so Parties engaged in a short or long-term task.
Force (Drefusk) – an organised grouping of six or so Groups engaged in a short or long-term task.
Regiment (Oyumyoss) – an organised grouping of six or so Forces engaged in a short or long-term task.

Words like ‘regiment’ or ‘force’ do not necessarily have military connotations. A construction crew might be termed a Building Force (Aydusk Drefusk); a large-scale mercantile expedition might be a Trading Regiment (Syopsun Oyumyoss). In a military context the general terms hunting – fighting – battling – warring are generally used for formations of the appropriate size. This is a holdover from ancient times and is not universal. Descriptive (and sometimes misleading out of context) terms are often substituted. Translations into other languages than Oynprith can be unintentionally amusing, such as ‘Tanking Regiment’ or ‘Defending and Food Delivering Force’. This seems to be lost on the Droyne themselves.

FORCE COMPOSITION

A Droyne community will create the sort of forces its Leaders deem necessary and which can be assembled. Composition and organisation is usually informal and very much at the level of small groups led rather than large units commanded. Forces tend to be biased towards 'infantry', which in some cases includes flight-capable Droyne or personnel equipped with advanced battle dress. Relatively little use is made of vehicles in a military context; defensive weapons are emplaced whilst those intended for mobile warfare are either mounted on spacecraft or deployed onto a ground mount from a landed craft.

Support units such as logistics and combat engineering formations are staffed by non-Warriors, who can fight in self-defence but are not considered to be combatants by Droyne Leaders. These formations will be escorted by Guarding Warriors and/or partially crewed by Voyaging Warriors if they are to operate in a hazardous area. Units of this sort may be included in a force or considered to be a separate, supporting formation as necessary.

When operating offensively, Droyne forces tend to make use of spacecraft for mobility rather than vehicles, if technology permits. Given the size of forces fielded by all but the largest communities, small but high-value combat units are the most effective formations that could be fielded; mass armies are almost unknown. On the defensive, static installations and tenacious security units provide effective protection for settlements and installations.

A very large Droyne force can best be thought of as a swarm of smaller ones, loosely coordinated. Each small unit is highly effective and if overall cohesion is almost entirely absent there is a general consensus towards the accomplishment of goals. It is difficult to halt the advance of such a force; Droyne are not deterred by casualties unless their Leaders deem the endeavour not worth the effort and smashing one small unit makes little difference to the overall situation.

NAVAL FORCES

As with ground forces, Droyne 'navies' are different to those of most other races. Organisation at the highest level is virtually non-existent; Leaders present their subordinates with goals and these are pursued in an individualistic manner. 'Individualistic' in this context refers to the commanders of ships rather than specific personnel. There are Droyne 'admirals' but they do not command a cohesive force in the way a human admiral might.

Naval forces are crewed by Voyaging Warriors, with some Guard and Battling Warriors aboard in case they are needed. Voyaging Warriors are not technologically ignorant but they do not have the aptitude that Technicians would. Thus shipboard weapons are generally well served and vessels are skilfully piloted but maintenance and logistics are rarely as good.

Droyne ships tend to be more or less unique; each one hand-built to suit the present need. Pure warships are uncommon but those that do exist tend to be deadly. In time of need a community might rebuild some of its vessels for combat but for the most part large-scale naval warfare is not a Droyne characteristic. If a naval campaign is to be fought it tends to take the form of infiltration and strikes by powerful single vessels. Groups of vessels cannot really be called squadrons in the usual sense; they are simply not organised in the same way as those of other races.

Cooperation between vessels is informal but usually excellent due to telepathic links between commanders. In some cases this extends to the Droyne in charge of divisions aboard a vessel, creating a network that incorporates all the major functions of each ship. This can go badly awry if the Droyne directing the force is not a skilled tactician or makes errors in predicting where each vessel needs to be and with what velocity but on a small scale it can be very effective. The near-miraculous targeting of long-range shots from beam weapons or the convergence of fire on a single point makes fighting Droyne ships a dangerous and daunting prospect.

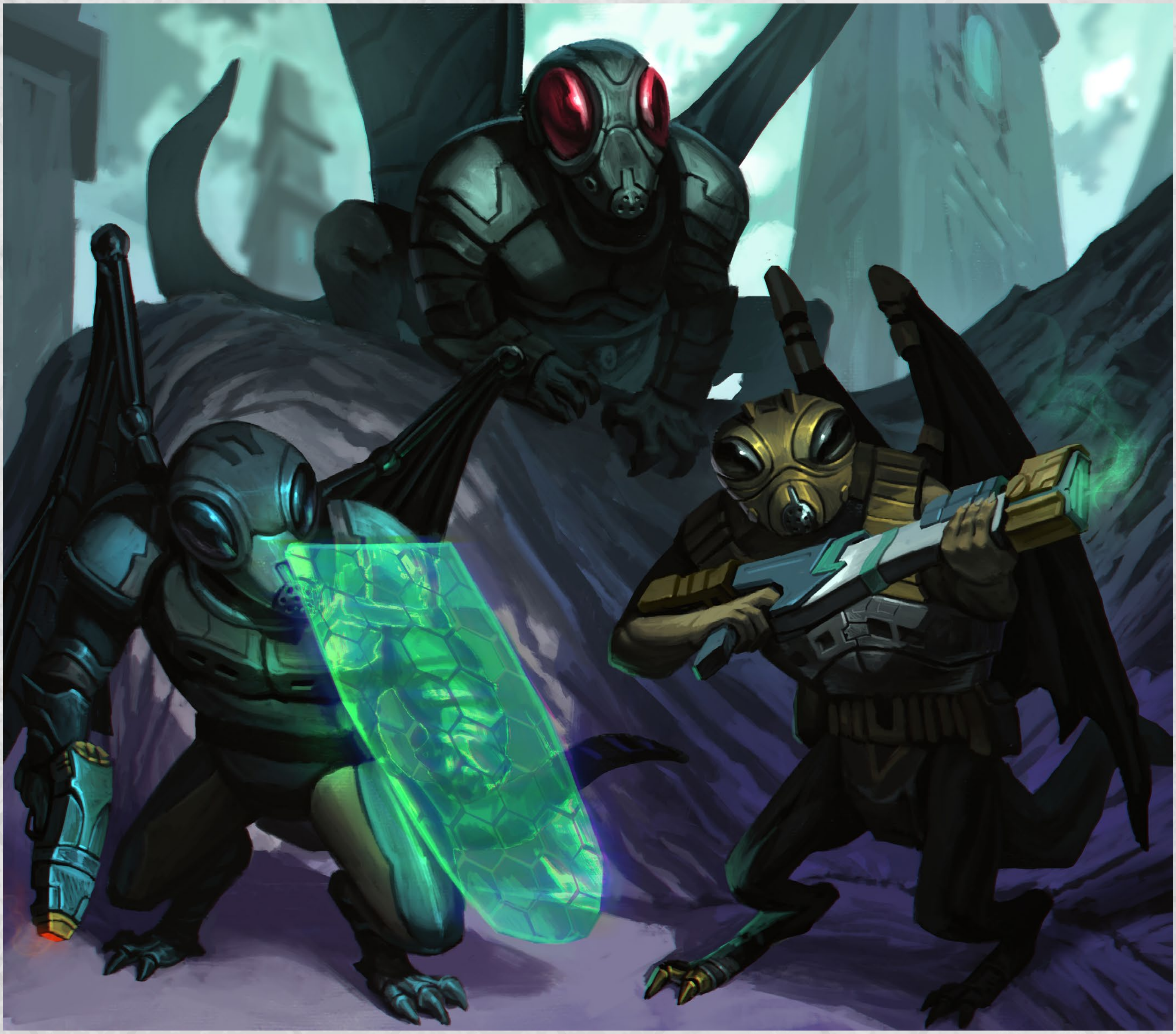
Naval warfare, like ground combat, is generally conducted on a small scale and with specific aims in mind. Droyne do not seem to be interested in capturing territory and are entirely willing to eliminate a threat by orbital bombardment of civilian targets. If a 'ritual war' were being fought it would be a series of engagements between Warrior-crewed starships but if conflict with non-Droyne becomes necessary there is every possibility that ship-to-ship combat would serve only one purpose – to get weapons of mass destruction into range of an enemy's cities.

Not all conflicts come to this, of course. More often, Warriors are landed to carry out a specific operation such as retrieving artefacts taken from the Droyne. Escalation through misunderstanding is likely, however. A Droyne naval force that lands ground troops for a retrieval or similar limited expedition might consider the matter over and resolved once the objective has been recovered. Continuing to attack the ships of the force would, in the eyes of the Droyne, represent continuation or even escalation of the conflict after it should have ended. This elevates the opponent from the target of a raid to an enemy of the Droyne community that launched it.

The Droyne force might decide to eliminate such a threat using far more violence than originally intended. Those who understand the Droyne might be careful to keep their resistance within the limits expected by the attackers – firing on the ground troops is entirely acceptable and engaging the ships delivering them would probably be within the expected limits. However, pursuing and firing on the force as it retires goes beyond the limits of the operation as envisaged by the Droyne Leaders and constitutes an unnecessary attack.

This is an artefact of the Droyne way of thinking. A mission to attack a specific target is deemed necessary and resistance is a natural consequence but continuing the engagement after the mission has been completed would be considered unprovoked aggression – even if the Droyne ships were exchanging fire with the defenders just moments ago. Outsiders are sometimes baffled to see Droyne ground and naval forces simply stop fighting and return to base; Droyne Leaders are equally confused when humans and others do not do so.

The upshot of this is that sometimes a Droyne ship will carry out an aggressive action in a limited fashion, then suddenly unleash far more powerful weapons or engage targets it was previously trying to avoid damaging. A retiring force might turn around, return to the target world and shoot up the starport before resuming its retreat. Actions of this sort have led to many humans thinking Droyne are entirely unpredictable but in fact their behaviour is as logical as that of any other species… from their own perspective.



CHAPTER - SIXTEEN

POLITICS AND COMMERCE

Droyne have little political activity, internal or external, in the usual sense. Society is rigidly structured and Leaders are rarely questioned. When this does occur, the usual outcome is for Leaders proven wrong to perform Krinaytsyu. This is not a punishment – more a service to society. A junior Leader who challenges their superiors and is proven wrong removes themselves from the command chain because their judgement is obviously flawed. Superiors who are proven wrong on a major matter will do the same, for the same reasons. Non-Leaders do not challenge their Leaders.

Inter-community politics is almost as low-key. Even where multiple Oytripin exist on a world they tend to their own business and interact in a loosely cooperative way. Droyne worlds rarely suffer population pressure or competition for resources and other reasons for conflict rarely apply. Droyne do not go to war with one another out of hatred or pride, or over ownership of some remote place. They have few reasons to fight one another and do not need to engage in constant political manoeuvring to avoid conflict or to gain an advantage if one were to break out.

Sports acting as emissaries move back and forth between communities and between Leaders within them too, maintaining a routine level of respect and cooperation. If a community needs something it will ask and if another Oytrip can assist without impairing its own functions it will do so. Such interactions generally come without strings attached or any sense of debt; the fact that a community has given aid to another on many occasions carries little weight when the recipient decides whether it can afford to assist or not. The concept of goodwill appears not to exist, at least in the usual sense. Droyne from different communities will help one another if they can but will always put the needs of their own Oytrip first.

This may be a result of the Droyne way of thinking; the same lack of vision that caused worlds to remain at the same Tech Level for millennia and prevented the Droyne from creating a star-spanning empire once the Ancients were out of the picture. The Oytrip is everything and anything outside it is of no consequence unless it affects the Oytrip. Scientific or exploration missions do venture out but only in response to a perceived long or short-term need. Exploration or expansion for its own sake is an alien concept to the Droyne.

Interactions with outsiders are similarly Oytrip-centric. Droyne often completely ignore attempts to interact with them. Sometimes this is because clueless outsiders are attempting to open diplomatic relations with a party of Workers or Technicians but even when an approach is made to Leaders or through a Sport acting as emissary, it may well be ignored. If the needs of the community are served by an interaction, it will take place. If the Leaders or their emissary cannot see a reason why they need to deal with an outside group they will go about their business without acknowledging the approach.

Droyne communities do not get involved in external politics. The antics of the humans or Vargr on the other side of the planet are of no interest unless the needs of the Oytrip are served. Even then, interactions are on a one-off basis, just like interactions between Droyne communities. Requests for aid are made and considered; trade deals are set up or refused, and the matter is closed. Outsiders coming to an Oytrip seeking long-term alliance or an exclusive trading relationship are inevitably disappointed.

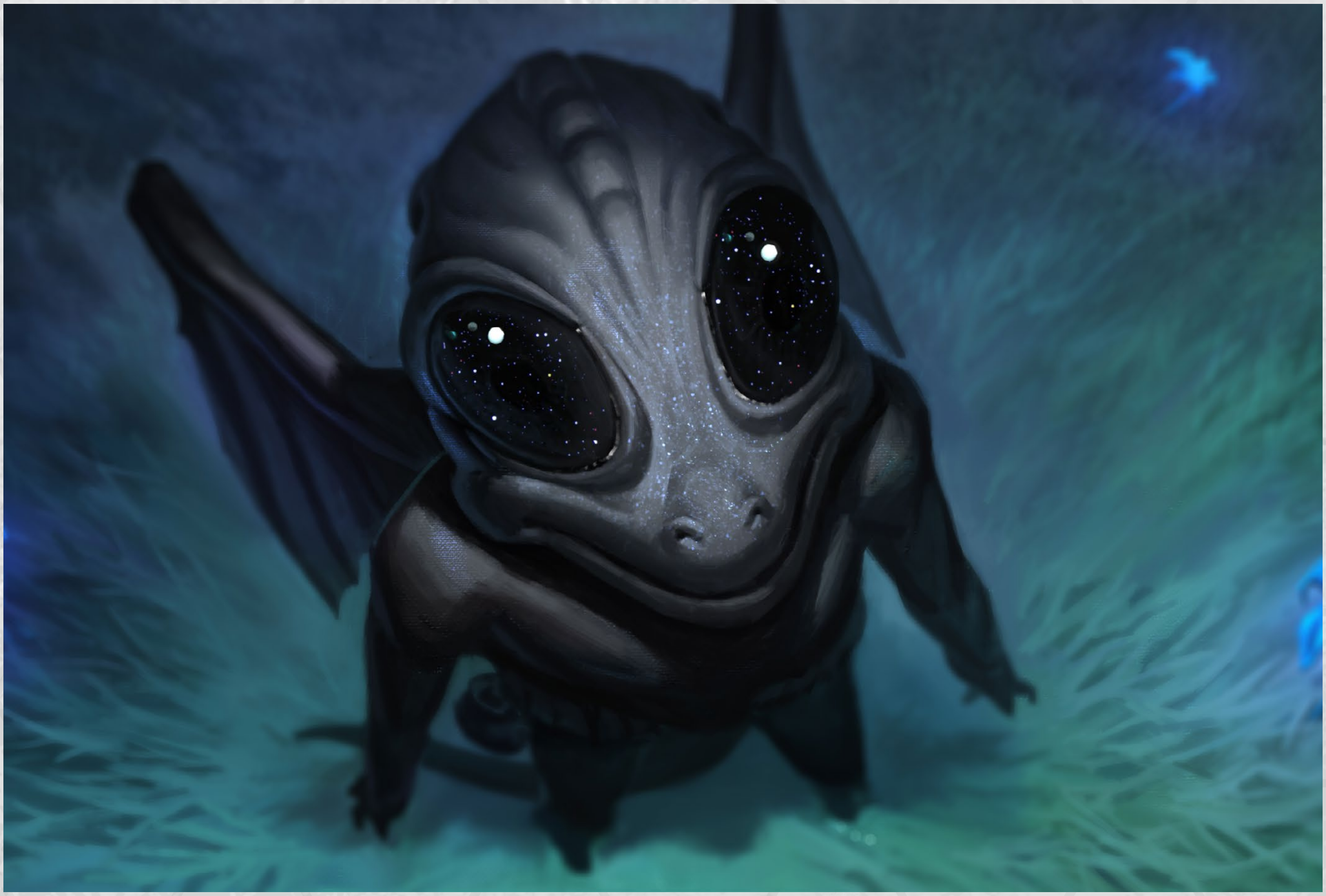
It is possible to trade with a Droyne community on a long-term basis, so long as the Oytrip's Leaders consider the exchange beneficial. Similarly, Droyne merchant ships do exist, offering exotic (to outsiders at least) goods and artworks for sale wherever they visit. However, there will always be a reason why the Oytrip is launching a trade mission. It may be that it needs the money – needs, not wants; Droyne do not care about riches for their own sake. Alternatively, the trade mission might be undertaken to observe the reactions of outsiders to the goods or to learn more about them. Droyne are generally not that interested in outsiders but occasionally the desire may arise to study them. Trade might even serve ceremonial purposes, perhaps a distribution of Droyne goods among other races might be part of a large-scale, long-term ritual. Reasons vary but there is always one – Droyne do not trade for profit unless they perceive a need for large amounts of foreign currency. Given the nature of their society, that would be unusual.

Droyne Passivity

Most species perceive, at some level, that they are engaged in a constant battle for survival and seek to dominate their environment. This leads to a drive to conquer, to explore and to accumulate wealth through trade, which is curiously lacking in Droyne. It has been theorised that the Droyne ability to develop new castes when they are needed and the way ancient memories are preserved in their society, gives them a sort of racial consciousness that they will survive. Thus rather than trying to battle the universe into submission the Droyne are content to live in it.

Proponents of this theory suggest that the root of other species' aggressive attitude to the universe they inhabit is fear; a fear the Droyne do not share. Where terrified humans, Vargr or K'Kree build great ships to smash their way through the metaphorical waves of fate, Droyne are happy to drift along on a raft. At an instinctive level they know they will be tossed about but will survive – at least as a species. This is enough for a race whose members think in terms of communities, not individuals. Thus a Droyne serves their Oytrip and the Oytrip takes action when necessary. Action can be dramatic but it is only taken when the need exists and for as long as the need exists. Once the need has passed, everyone settles down to their daily business once again.

There are those who scorn this attitude but they are the ones building great empires which collapse in bloody disaster sooner or later, leaving the contented Droyne bobbing along on their metaphorical raft for another few hundred thousand years. Perhaps the – mostly – meek and passive Droyne will inherit the universe after more driven species have burned themselves out.



CHAPTER - SÈVENTEEN

DROYNE WORLDS

Droyne communities vary considerably in technological sophistication and size. Where sufficient technology exists a world may be organised as a single Oytrip, although communities will still be quite small. Large cities are rare even on quite high-population worlds; where possible Droyne prefer to live in smaller communities interspersed with rural areas. The same pattern of settlement is seen on low-tech Droyne worlds but technological limitations mean that either the whole population is concentrated in a small area as a single Oytrip or the world will have multiple Oytripin.

ANDOR

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Andor is located in the Five Sisters subsector of the Spinward Marches. It is sometimes misnamed Andory, possibly due to confusion with neighbouring Candory. Andor and Candory are unusual; two Droyne worlds within one parsec of one another is uncommon, to say the least. This, along with planetside conditions well suited to the evolution of the Droyne, is thought by many to indicate that Andor may be the original Droyne homeworld. The Oytrip of Andor is even less willing than most to allow research expeditions to operate in its territory, which again is widely considered to be evidence of a secret to be uncovered. However, the Imperium has never been willing to fight to the death in order to carry out an archaeological study, so Andor remains a mystery to this day.

Andor itself is a small world with high atmospheric pressure. Remote reconnaissance suggests it might once have been wetter, perhaps covered in wetland forests suitable for the presumed evolutionary path of the Droyne. The 60 million or so inhabitants are all Droyne, dwelling in small cities of less than one million population each. In between are large areas of unused land, which has reverted to its natural state outside the agricultural zones around each city.

The Oytrip of Andor is observed to possess a mature and universal TL9, suggesting this Tech Level has been in place for a very long time. Unknown devices, possibly of Ancients origin, have been spotted but none have been studied. There are – as always – those who believe Andor is a treasure trove of Ancients technology and the local Oytrip is concealing whole cities full of functional devices. This is rather unlikely but has been the subject of several vid-dramas. One of the most popular – largely due to its low-budget awfulness gaining it cult status – is *Apocalypse Andor*.

In this garish and poorly acted offering, a horde of Droyne armed with Ancients super-weapons come boiling out of Andor and attack the rest of the universe for unspecified reasons. A scene in which an Imperial Tigress-class dreadnaught is sliced in half by some kind of beam from the planet's surface continues to reappear as 'suppressed footage the Imperium doesn't want you to see' on the datanets of many worlds. This sort of cheap entertainment does nothing to ease the paranoia felt by many about the mysterious Droyne and the fact that Andor and Candory are Red Zoned and ringed by Imperial naval bases suggests that the threat is taken seriously at the highest level.

It is surprisingly easy to get an Imperial permit to visit Andor. The process is lengthy but not difficult and once in possession of the right paperwork Travellers can land at the modest downport. Any ship without the right clearance will be intercepted by craft from the strong interdiction force, which typically centres on a light carrier and a few destroyers. Ships that run before reaching the surface will be fired upon but the intent is to disable and board. Those that try to evade the mandatory post-visit search, or which somehow slip through to the surface, will be stopped by any means necessary including spinal weapons fire if a suitable ship is present. Droyne vessels are not impeded in any way.

Disappointment awaits those who reach the surface. Visitors are restricted to the starport, which has a modest number of non-Droyne staff who deal with outsiders. There are museums which convey little real information and souvenir shops that charge a lot for very little. There are also bands of frustrated researchers and Ancients hunters hanging around the port. Some are prestigious scientists from top universities, others field parties of undergraduates. The remainder are cranks and conspiracy theorists hoping to uncover the secret of Andor… somehow. In fact, many of them already know it and will reveal proof for cash, drinks or help in slipping past the security perimeter.

The Droyne of Andor are perceived as being more secretive than most but in reality they are simply not interested in the wider universe. Ships voyage out on a variety of missions but most are small and clearly not intended for large-scale trade. Intriguingly, many of the ships used by Andor's Droyne are clearly of higher technology than is available locally. Whilst the 'Ancients Theorists' claim this proves the local Oytrip is hiding something, it is more likely the vessels were obtained elsewhere.

Within the cities and the farmlands that surround them, the Droyne live comfortable and peaceful lives. Their society is well-ordered and runs as it has for millennia, undisturbed by the ring of Imperial naval bases and warships surrounding their world. These serve to keep unwanted visitors out more than to contain the Droyne, which suits the inhabitants of Andor. The few that do manage to slip out of the starport or land on Andor without permission are usually picked up by patrols of Warriors and deposited back at the port with instructions to leave as soon as possible. Resistance is dealt with efficiently and without remorse.

The Oytrip of Andor does have military forces. Each city has aerospace defence installations and artillery forts around its periphery. These are not obvious as such until their weapons are revealed and are sufficient that it would take a significant force to overwhelm them. Mobile defence is the province of small units – typically a Battling Force equipped with grav vehicles, combat armour and TL10 small arms – which can respond to an incident far from the cities. Urban defence units composed mainly of Guard Warriors stand ready to repel an assault on the cities. It is not known whether there is any truth to the rumours that some kind of 'special forces' equipped with Ancients technology are also available.

Although for the most part the Droyne of Andor are uninterested in the wider universe, they do possess a number of starships. Most are small, suitable for carrying emissaries or a Leader and their entourage. These ships can be encountered all across the sector and beyond, carrying out errands that may or may not be obvious to outsiders. Sometimes a ship will land in a deserted area and the crew will carry out what looks like survey work. On other occasions a Droyne ship might land at a port and depart again without anyone disembarking. There have been periods of over a year where no ships arrived at or left Andor's port, then surges of activity that lasted months or years.

Intelligence services routinely pay a fee – albeit a small one – for a DC&O (Droyne Confirmation and Observation). Essentially this is a small bounty for information that could be used to track ships out of Andor and perhaps to build up a picture of who the emissaries are visiting, what the scientists are researching, and ultimately what the Oytrip of Andor is up to.

AUITAWRY

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Auitawry is located in the Binary subsector of the Trojan Reach but this distinction is more or less meaningless since the system lies in the Great Rift. With only one other star system within jump range and a seven-parsec transit from there to the 'shore' of the Great Rift, Auitawry is as isolated as a star system can be. This possibly explains the survival of a technological society there after the Final War that destroyed the Ancients. There are some signs of damage caused during the Final War but it appears that only some installations were targeted and very precisely. It is not possible to say what these targets were but clearly they were of greater value than those that were left untouched.

Imperial scouts venturing into the Great Rift encountered Droyne vessels in the Sarage system and soon afterward made contact with the Oytrip of Auitawry. The presence of extensive Ancients sites on the world prompted an immediate interdiction order despite the remoteness of the planet and soon afterward a naval base was constructed at Sarage. Sarage currently has a small human population and status as an Imperial client state and a standing naval force is maintained there. This is obviously connected with Auitawry but whether it is to contain the Droyne of that world or to prevent unauthorised access – or both – remains unclear. The nearest non-Rift systems are within the Aslan Hierate, so it seems to be in the interests of the Imperium to prevent the Aslan from gaining access to Ancients artefacts.

The Droyne of Auitawry have a modest fleet of TL15 starships and are not impeded if they choose to pass through Sarage. It can be presumed that there are circumstances under which they would be contained or prevented from returning home but the Droyne are quite capable of creating deep space refuelling points that would permit them to bypass Sarage entirely. Instead, the Imperium chooses to provide fuel to passing ships if they want it and to study vessels moving through the system. Most do nothing more than refuel at Sarage, if they choose not to use the gas giants instead, but occasionally a meaningful interaction takes place.

Although Auitawry is Red Zoned, it is possible to obtain a permit to land and the Droyne are apparently willing to allow the very occasional research team to visit the Ancients sites. They are far from the locations of modern cities and generally ignored by the Droyne populace.

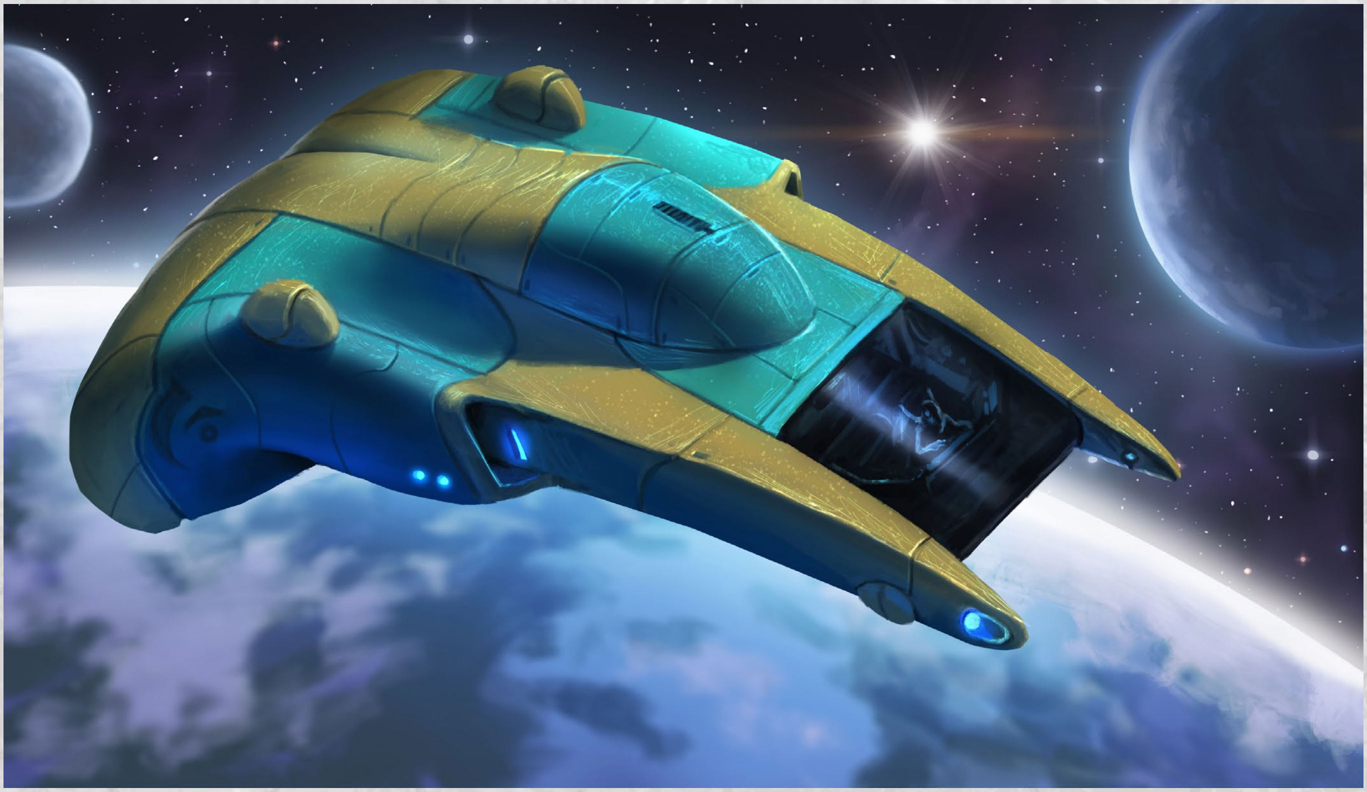
Most requests to visit are flatly refused without any reason given and those who are caught violating the sites are usually killed by Droyne warriors. It is not clear why some researchers have been given access whilst most are kept away at fusion gunpoint.

The Droyne cities of Auitawry are technological marvels. They rise as elegant spires, seemingly fragile and narrow until the scale of the buildings is perceived. With only half a billion Droyne on Auitawry, the cities contain huge expanses of nearly-empty space that the Droyne show no inclination to fill. The result can be rather eerie, like walking through a gigantic tomb.

The few humans 'officially' on Auitawry dwell at the starport and have surprisingly little contact with the Droyne. There are Droyne all around but they go about their business for the most part as if the human population was not there. Providing the humans and other offworld races do not impede the business of the Oytrip they are ignored other than the occasional interaction with an emissary. The Droyne have never explained their laws and customs but the local population have figured out how to stay out of trouble. This is just as well; offenders are usually given a time period to leave Auitawry and may be killed on sight after this period. The Droyne are not interested in excuses and if no ship is available to extract an offender they have only one option – flight into the wilderness.

Those that do escape justice are not pursued unless there is some good reason to do so, like possession of stolen items. There are a few small rural communities of offworld 'Auitlaws' as they are popularly called. They are allowed to live openly in unclaimed land so long as they stay away from the cities and the Ancients sites. Attempts have been made to use the Auitlaws as contacts for an expedition but the Droyne have a strict policy of only permitting ships to land at the port and will attack vessels that defy it. It is also likely they would destroy Auitlaw communities that assisted infiltration of their world in this manner.

Auitawry is unusual as Droyne communities go, in that its ships range over a wide area. At least, they are thought to. It is not always possible to positively identify a Droyne ship, so it is possible that some vessels assumed to be operating out of this world in fact have home ports elsewhere. Most ships tend to be multipurpose vessels, carrying some cargo but also capable of acting as exploration or scientific platforms. It is not clear to what purpose all this activity is directed but it seems to occur in irregular waves, with many vessels sighted over a few years then almost none. This may indicate long-range exploration is taking place or there may be some entirely different explanation. As usual with Droyne, they are not telling.



KILENNUR

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Kilennur lies in the Harlequin subsector of the Solomani Rim. Physically, it has many similarities to Andor; it is small, with a dense atmosphere and reasonable amount of surface water. The world lies on the sector's primary main but can be bypassed by jump-1 ships. The majority of the population are human, living in an oppressive police state that is part of the Imperium. The Droyne of Kilennur number around 30 million, and form an entirely separate society. Their territory is a single continent, which is officially considered a client state of the Imperium but in practice is mostly ignored.

The Droyne of Kilennur were contacted by the Vilani as their Imperium expanded. Initially assumed to be a minor race, they were named the Nugiiri by the Vilani and deemed not to be a threat. The Nugiiri had an advanced society at this time, capable of building primitive spacecraft. They had no interest in doing so, however, and were content to be absorbed into the First Imperium under a treaty whereby they ceded all claims to the system and most of the planet in return for protection and self-rule on a single continent.

The Nugiiri were unaffected by the Interstellar Wars between the Vilani Imperium and the Terran Confederation and the Rule of Man that came afterward had more urgent matters to deal with than studying a minor race on a backwater world. The human/Droyne treaty was included in the rounds of mass-ratifications as the Rule of Man struggled with the bureaucratic load it inherited and after the collapse of the Rule of Man the Droyne went about their business as before.

Kilennur had been settled by small numbers of humans, who were isolated and fell back to barbarism during the Long Night. The Droyne may not have even noticed what was going on; they do not appear to have expanded beyond their continent-reservation despite there being opportunity. Local powers that retained starflight through the Long Night may have visited the world but found little of interest.

Thus when explorers from the Third Imperium arrived they found a sizable human population living at TL1-2 and a flourishing but insular TL8 society of Droyne. The ancient treaty was located in the archives and deemed suitable by the Imperials, who sent emissaries to Kilennur to re-ratify it and renegotiate if necessary. The 'Nugiiri', as they were still called, politely ignored the effort and eventually the emissaries concluded that the old treaty was still considered to be in force. Settlement and development of Kilennur took place, generally ignored by the Droyne, and gradually a technological and industrial base was established.

Kilennur eventually became part of the Solomani Sphere when the autonomous region was established and was reintegrated into the Imperium during the Solomani Rim War. There was a little skirmishing in the system and a token resistance on the ground but for the most part the war passed Kilennur by. Post-war security measures resulted in the current police state and there have been incursions into Droyne territory in the post-war years. These have been quickly dealt with, usually by forces of Droyne Warriors who give the intruders one chance to withdraw then open fire.

Tacit support by the world's human government for these incursions, which might eventually lead to annexation of the reserve and its natural resources, has at times led to confrontation between the Droyne and human populations. This drew Imperial displeasure, in the form of a visit from a party of senior officials in the sector administration. Their message was clear – the Droyne of Kilennur have a treaty with the Imperium guaranteeing their territorial sovereignty and the Imperium honours its treaties even if member worlds will not. The squadron of heavy cruisers in orbit served as a sufficiently broad hint and the number of incursions sharply dropped.

Whereas the overall Tech Level of Kilennur is 10, the Oytrip remains at a stable TL8. It does not have a spaceport as such but each of the cities has its own landing area and may operate a few craft. The Droyne of Kilennur seem to have no interest in space but occasionally receive visitors from other Droyne communities. Other than this, they have little contact with outsiders and seem contents that way.

TUBROYLLUFOTYUSK

A674999-D

Tubroyllufotyusk is located in the No Return subsector of Crucis Margin. Its system is sparse, with three other terrestrial planets and no gas giants or planetoids. Tubroyllufotyusk itself is dry, with a standard atmosphere. Its taint does not seem to affect the four billion or so Droyne living there but the human minority – around three percent of the population – require filter masks.

There are actually several Droyne communities on Tubroyllufotyusk. The dominant one is known to outsiders as the Oytrip of Tubroyllufotyusk, although its own people may use a different name. This dominant Oytrip has a population of around three and a half billion, dwelling in large and small cities scattered across the entire planetary surface. In addition there are many other Oytripin whose societies range from the hunter-gatherer level up to around TL9. These communities interact with their starfaring brethren but remain independent. They occupy lands between the cities of the dominant Oytrip and are apparently well respected. For reasons no outsider can fathom these communities have no inclination to combine or to change their lifestyles.

For a Droyne world, the Oytrip of Tubroyllufotyusk is unusually influential in the local region. Numerous small powers exist, along with many single-world states, and whilst Tubroyllufotyusk does not pursue a political agenda its presence can be a stabilising influence. The Oytrip has been known to act decisively and without warning when its interests are threatened and has the power to smash most of the nearby polities. As a result they tend to tread carefully in their dealings with one another.

In the past, the Oytrip of Tubroyllufotyusk has been known to send out surges of vessels for various purposes. In some cases this has been a veritable orgy of trading, either direct or in the form of long cruises between distant worlds. On other occasions there has been no discernible pattern or purpose to the missions. A bewildering range of vessels were involved, of all sizes, and so far as they could be tracked some of these ships made long and apparently aimless journeys whilst others carried out a series of short there-and-back hops.

The Oytrip has been stable at TL13 for as long as records about it exist. It is impossible to date cities by appearance or architecture – they are spotless and little is known about changes in building style over the centuries. Descriptions and very rare images from long-ago visits suggest that nothing has changed in centuries or millennia.

The Droyne of Tubroyllufotyusk are more open to visitors than most but this is not saying much. A small human staff at the starport provide advice on how to avoid the worst pitfalls that can befall an unwary Traveller but there are still some unusual hazards. It is quite possible to starve to death in one of the cities whilst Droyne workers ignore pleas for aid. As with many Droyne cities there are areas where Workers are left to carry out simple tasks. Leaders do not need to go there and someone who wanders in and gets into trouble cannot rely on Workers to raise the alarm on their behalf. Likewise, it is possible to get into an area that concealed dangerous machinery. These are clearly marked for those who understand Droyne symbology but someone who cannot tell one squiggle from another may not realise until far too late where they are.

Those who take the time to learn the correct rituals can obtain an audience with a Leader-of-Leaders and conduct business. It is rare for a request to be granted but occasionally a petitioner finds they suddenly have the support of an entire high-technology Oytrip, at least for the present time. Those who simply want to sightsee are ignored by the population unless they enter a sensitive area. The Droyne will remove someone whose presence interferes with their business but will ignore someone in mortal peril if there are other tasks to attend to. The best-guess interpretation of this behaviour is that the Droyne consider anyone stupid enough to ignore the warnings is irrelevant and society is better off without them.

The Oytrip of Tubroyllufotyusk has a large fleet of starships but no starship construction yards as such. Vessels are more or less hand-built, usually on the ground but occasionally in orbit. Researchers have been able to witness – albeit from a distance – the extensive role of ritual in the construction process. Components must not only be mounted correctly but must also be positioned ‘just so’ when they are laid out ready for fitting and there are what appear to be rituals associated with their transportation and storage. It may be that these are the Droyne equivalent of safety checks and handover procedures. There is no human equivalent for the practice of stopping work every few hours to conduct some kind of ceremony involving part or all of the workforce.

The end result of this rather inefficient process is a beautiful ship that will serve for many years and which seems to be a source of pride – or perhaps an icon representing the honour of the Oytrip. Ships appear to be venerated; the Droyne of Tubroyllufotyusk are protective of them in a way that exceeds their respect for cities or most objects. Some ships are associated with particular Leaders; others seem to be passed from one user to another. Some researchers would phrase that differently, suggesting that a Leader is presented to the ship rather than the other way around.

It seems that the web of contacts maintained by the Oytrip of stretches far further than most Droyne communities. During the Psionics Suppressions, which began in 800, a large and well-organised expedition left several Imperial worlds, made rendezvous and headed directly for Tubroyllufotyusk. The Oytrip took the refugees in and has received several further migrations since. It is likely that these are students or practitioners of the psionic arts who fear persecution but this has never been confirmed. There are also enclaves of Droyne on various worlds, some of them far off, who profess membership of the Oytrip of Tubroyllufotyusk even though they seem to have no contact with it.

CHAPTER-EIGHTEEN

DROYNE PSIONICS

Psionic powers are an integral part of Droyne society. All Droyne are assessed in their youth and training begins as soon as abilities manifest themselves. Even Droyne without useable abilities are trained to operate in a psionics-rich environment. They know what to expect from those using powers and how to cooperate effectively with them. Some Droyne devices include psionic controls or require attunement to the mind of the operator. Non-psionic Droyne can operate some of these items but most are assigned to those with relevant abilities.

All Droyne have a PSI characteristic, rolled for during Traveller creation (see page 191). Droyne psionic training is handled similarly to that for other races but takes place after all characteristics have been rolled for, before the Traveller's first term.

Droyne have access to the usual talents and abilities available to psionic individuals, plus some additional capabilities. Most of these fall within the standard talents and can be used by any Droyne trained in that field if they have sufficient skill and psionic power. However, all modern Droyne and Chirpers can use the Invisibility, Homing and Link abilities, whether they possess psionic training or not.

TELEPATHY

Droyne can use all standard Telepathy abilities and in addition can control their Invisibility. Additional abilities are available to Droyne trained in Telepathy.

Boost

The Boost ability allows Droyne to amplify the effects of others by combining their powers. Any number of the Droyne's PSI points above what is being used to activate the Boost ability can be made available to whomever they are Boosting. Multiple Droyne can Boost a single individual. The duration of a Boost is up to 10 minutes, although other Droyne can take over during or after this time.

Check: Routine (6+) Telepathy (1D seconds, PSI)
Reach: Short
PSI Cost: 5

Forgetfulness

Forgetfulness may be a more powerful version of the Invisibility ability. It causes the target to suffer amnesia, covering a period equal in hours to the PSI of the attacker, up to the moment of the attack and perhaps for a few moments after. These memories are not eradicated, merely suppressed, and can be recovered by medical or psionic means. If the target fails a Difficult (10+) INT check, the amnesia is total and they do not realise anything is wrong. If the check is made or the target is presented with evidence they have forgotten the past few hours, they may begin to realise something is wrong. All they can recall is a confused jumble but this may give some clues or put them on the path to recovering their memories.

Check: Difficult (10+) Telepathy (1D seconds, PSI)
Reach: Close
PSI Cost: 6

Invisibility

Invisibility falls within the Telepathy talent since it acts upon the minds of others but it is believed to be available to most Droyne and Chirpers as an instinctive ability. The user is not actually invisible; they can be seen as normal by cameras, motion detectors and other devices, or by psionically shielded individuals. What happens is that the target fails to notice the 'invisible' Droyne due to distractions, something more interesting or some other circumstance.

The Invisibility ability is activated instinctively by untrained individuals but can be selected by anyone who has the Telepathy ability. If uncontrolled, it activates whenever an individual feels threatened. If active, it affects all unshielded minds within 400 metres. This can be awkward if the sudden disappearance was unintentional. To be affected, a being must possess at least rudimentary intelligence. A Droyne or Chirper could thus become undetectable to a snake or a shark but very primitive creatures (and plants) will not be affected.

Those affected by the Invisibility ability will be quite unable to spot the Droyne and will temporarily forget about them. Even attempts to draw attention to the 'invisible' Droyne will fail. A shielded individual may be amused to see their companions fiddling with equipment, gazing intently at a discarded pizza box or updating their social media status whilst a party of Droyne wanders by but will find they also fail to notice attempts to point the Droyne out.

There are limitations to this ability. People under threat will snap back to focus and be able to perceive the 'invisible' Droyne providing they realise the threat is coming from them. A shielded Traveller who strikes their companion to try to alert them will more than likely find themselves the target of annoyance or even retaliation, even as Droyne Warriors are levelling fusion guns. However, the Invisibility ability is relatively subtle and the target's subconscious can break through with a warning. Essentially the target's conscious mind is directed to other things but their eyes still see and their brain still processes the information. A gun pointed at the Traveller will usually be enough of a threat to make them take notice. There are innumerable tales of ambushes by Droyne along the lines of 'they were right on top of us before we saw them' or 'we had no idea they were there until they opened fire'.

Ordinarily, spotting a Droyne using Invisibility requires a Difficult (10+) Recon or INT check. In a situation where an 'invisible' Droyne presents a clear threat to someone, such as aiming a weapon, or causes such a disturbance that a Traveller cannot fail to notice it, the Traveller may make an Average (8+) Recon or INT check to realise what is happening. The difficulty falls to Routine (6+) if the Droyne causes harm to the Traveller. It is still possible that the Traveller might get hurt yet fail to perceive the Droyne who just shot them. In this case the Traveller will misinterpret the situation and believe the attack came from some other source but can make another check each round until the reality of the situation finally intrudes.

A Droyne who is spotted can disappear again once the target loses track of them, either during a chaotic fight or due to losing line of sight.

Check: None
Reach: Very Long
PSI Cost: 0

Transfer

The Transfer ability allows a Droyne to transfer anything they know to someone else and is often used to train young Droyne to perform various tasks. If used in this manner, a Droyne can teach another to perform any skill they know, up to their own level of skill. For this reason, large Oytrips often have specialist master-mentors in important skill areas, ensuring the Oytrip has plenty of personnel capable of performing in key areas. Training someone requires one whole day (including some time to rest, eat and perform the appropriate rituals) per skill level and skill levels must be taught one at a time.

It is also possible to transfer memories or vast amounts of information to a recipient in this manner. There may once have been an idiot-savant caste, which could have acted as a repository for all this information but it apparently became extinct. Any modern Droyne can absorb a great deal of information but it is possible to become overloaded when carrying around thousands of years of memories or huge volumes of complex data. The ideal candidates usually come from the Drone caste, combining a relatively low INT with high PSI. Apparently, not thinking too much is the best way to keep everything straight, although even so these living memory-repositories are often distracted to the point of barely being able to function. They will pass on some or all of their memories upon command, but only at the direction of Leaders.

Whichever way it is used, the Transfer ability requires PSI 10+ and normally requires drugs, Boosting by other Droyne or certain closely-guarded transfer-facilitation rituals.

Check: Average (8+) Telepathy (1 day per skill level, PSI)
Reach: Medium
PSI Cost: 20

CLAIRVOYANCE

Droyne clairvoyance includes all standard abilities plus unique ones arising from the intensely strong link between a Droyne and their home Oytrip.

Homing

All Droyne, Chirpers and related races have an innate ability to know how far they are from their home Oytrip and in what direction. This is permanently active and functions whether or not the Droyne has received any psionic training. It may be that this ability is connected with the distress most Droyne suffer when they are away from their Oytrip. If so, the Homing ability still functions in Sports but may not cause as much distress so long as they have a home to return to. If an Oytrip is destroyed or a Droyne is ejected from it for whatever reason, the Homing ability will cease to function and the Droyne may well lose the will to live. The role of the Oytrip can be temporarily and partially replaced by the creation of a Kroyloss, or fraternity, but the need to belong to an Oytrip is such that sooner or later a wandering Droyne will leave the Kroyloss for an Oytrip or will work towards changing the fraternity into a proper community.

Check: Routine (6+) Clairvoyance (1D seconds, PSI)
Reach: Personal
PSI Cost: 0

Link

All members of a Droyne family (Dreskay) have a psionic Link, whether they are trained in Clairvoyance or not, allowing them to locate any other member of their Oytrip. For the 15 seconds the Droyne can see and hear everything their Linked family member can and will know exactly where they are.

Check: Easy (4+) Clairvoyance (1D seconds, PSI)
Reach: Medium
PSI Cost: 1

AWARENESS

Droyne have access to all the usual Awareness abilities plus two unique ones.

Inner Eye

The Inner Eye ability may be connected to the casting abilities of Droyne. It allows control of metabolism and organ function and can be used to temporarily offset the effects of injury. When this ability is activated, damage is applied to the Droyne's PSI characteristic before END, then STR, then DEX as normal. If the Droyne does not run out of PSI, the natural regeneration of PSI points will remove this 'stored' damage without physical harm to the Droyne.

Check: Easy (4+) Awareness (1D seconds, PSI)
Reach: Personal
PSI Cost: 0

Rejuvenation

The Rejuvenation ability is used to avoid the effects of aging. Any time a Droyne with this ability suffers a reduction of any characteristic due to age, chronic illness or similar causes (not physical injury, poisoning and the like), the loss may be taken on PSI instead. Once the Droyne's PSI reaches zero they can no longer avoid the effects of aging. It is believed that an advanced version of this ability may exist, useable only with PSI 15+ and it was by this means that Yaskoydray achieved immortality. There is no way to prove this, and no other immortal Droyne are known to have existed.

Check: Routine (6+) Awareness (PSI)
Reach: Personal
PSI Cost: 0

DROYNE PSIONICS AND OTHER SPECIES

When using psionic abilities against non-Droyne, PSI point costs for all abilities are doubled. This is due to differences in brain structure, ways of thinking and other factors not well understood by non-Droyne. It is rumoured that specially trained Droyne psi-warriors may exist who are able to use their powers at normal cost against specific species or even all species but this may be an artefact of Sixday-evening action-adventure shows rather than any form of formal research.

CHAPTER-NINETEEN

HIGH GUARD: DROYNE

Most of the components used by Droyne starships are similar in function to their human equivalents but they are often of very different appearance. It is not uncommon for unrelated components to be melded together for aesthetic or traditional reasons. There are a few concepts that vary from standard, detailed in this chapter.

DROYNE HULLS

The hulls of Droyne ships are more expensive than those of other races, partly because almost all ships are more or less hand-built and partly due to the extensive decoration that covers their entire surface. Even at its most basic this is beautiful, with swirling patterns in which moving figures can be made out… or perhaps they are imagined. A basic Droyne hull costs Cr100000 per ton.

Auspicious Hulls

Some Oytripin have the ability to create auspicious hulls for their ships. This is a lengthy and complex process, with many rituals that must be carefully followed. An auspicious hull will impress anyone seeing it – especially other Droyne – and a ship that has one performs better than one without. The reasons are complex, mystical and incomprehensible to non-Droyne but perfectly obvious to those who know the secrets of building such vessels.

A ship may only have one type of auspicious hull. Each requires different rituals and materials, and most Oytrips that can build vessels of this type only know how to make them auspicious in one or two fields. An auspicious hull consumes a varying amount of internal space, depending on its type.

Type	Cost Per Ton*	Percentage of Hull	Notes
Droyne Hull	Cr100000	0%	Impressively decorated.
Auspicious of Jump	Cr250000	4%	The vessel's crew receive DM+1 on all jump-related Engineer checks. The ship uses 10% less fuel per jump.
Auspicious of Manoeuvre	Cr150000	1%	The vessel's crew receive DM+1 on all Pilot checks.
Auspicious of Seeking	Cr200000	2%	The vessel's crew receive DM+1 on all Electronics (sensors) and Astrogation checks.
Auspicious of Leading	Cr200000	1%	The vessel's crew gain DM+1 on all Appeal, Leadership and Tactics checks.
Auspicious of Battling	Cr300000	3%	The vessel's crew gain DM+1 on all Gunner checks. In addition the ship gains Armour +2.
Auspicious of Communicating	Cr250000	2%	The vessel's crew gain DM+1 on all Diplomat and Broker checks and any other checks connected with diplomacy or commerce.

* Cost per ton of the entire hull, including any space used by the Auspicious hull.

Ship-Heart Chamber

Droyne vessels sometimes follow the practice of other races, with a pragmatic control centre similar to a standard cockpit or bridge. This is not to the liking of many Oytripin, however. It is preferred, where possible, to use a ship-heart chamber. This is more grandiose and ornamental than a mere bridge and fulfils slightly more functions. A ship-heart chamber will typically have a domed ceiling, with a dais for the ship's Leader. The command chair is reminiscent of a throne and it is here the Leader will receive visitors, petitioners and emissaries.

The ship-heart chamber is gorgeously decorated with iridescent patterns depicting the vessel's history and Oytrip affiliation, and serves as a briefing room (giving DM+1 to Tactics checks for any pre-planned operation), commercial activity centre (giving DM+1 to Broker checks) and coordination chamber for other activities such as surveys, groundside exploration or a construction project undertaken planetside but commanded from the ship. On ships over 5,000 tons the ship-heart chamber also acts as a flag bridge. Its size is proportional to the displacement of the vessel, with additional crew positions added as size increases. A very large ship-heart may have small antechambers, tables for refreshments and positions for supporting personnel such as the ship's most important Social and Priestly Drones.

A ship-heart chamber consumes 30 tons plus one ton per 100 tons displacement of the ship. It costs MCr1 per 100 tons of ship. A Ship-Heart Citadel can also be fitted. This consumes an additional 10 tons and raises the cost to MCr1.25 per 100 tons of ship. A Ship-Heart Citadel is surrounded by heavy bulkheads (and gains the benefit of that modification) as well as having its own life support system. It can be ejected from the ship but this act must be accompanied by funeral rites for the vessel – it will self-destruct as soon as its heart is no longer present.

Droyne Accommodation

The standard system of accommodation aboard a vessel or starship, using cabins and common areas, is nonsensical to Droyne. Instead accommodation is arranged in groups of six sleeping pods surrounded by a working and living area. Droyne accommodated in pod-clusters are assumed to have all necessary supporting facilities within their cluster, including everything from armouries to a galley. Additional space can be provided if desired, making the vessel more suitable for high-ranking Droyne. A pod-cluster can be set up as an emergency shelter for crew, allowing them to remain safe if the ship is depressurised. This version of the pod-cluster can be jettisoned from the ship when critical damage is taken.

Additional spaces can be simple common areas, paid for at the normal cost, but may be configured as ceremonial spaces at additional cost. Ceremonial spaces are beautifully decorated and contain statues, raised seating for important officials and everything necessary for in-flight ritual observances. A minor ceremonial space is sufficient for routine rituals, whereas a major ceremonial space can be used for almost any ritual. Cost and tonnage depend on how many Droyne are expected to be able to attend, subject to a minimum size.

A ceremonial space can be configured as a shelter in case the ship takes heavy damage. Such a space has its own life support equipment and discreet lockers for vacc suits in an antechamber and is protected by heavy bulkheads. A ceremonial citadel of this sort will usually survive even if the ship is blasted apart and is in some ways equivalent to a vault (see page 47 of *High Guard*). It is not uncommon for the ceremonial space to be located close to the ship-heart chamber, in which case the access corridor between the two will also be heavily protected. Both can remain linked together in the event that a ship is destroyed around them or can be ejected separately.

Component	Tons	Cost
Pod-Cluster (capacity 6 Droyne)	20	MCr5
Ejectable Pod-Cluster	24	MCr6
Ceremonial Space, Minor	6 + 1 per attendee	MCr0.25 per ton
Ceremonial Space, Major	20 + 2 per attendee	MCr1 per ton
Ceremonial Citadel, Minor	12 + 1 per attendee	MCr0.75 per ton
Ceremonial Citadel, Major	40+2 per attendee	MCr1.5 per ton

COMMUNICATIONS VESSEL

SIYOPARTTWI-TYPE

TL11		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	200 tons, Droyne Hull	—	20
M-Drive	Thrust 3 (energy efficient)	6	13.2
Jump Drive	Jump 2	15	22.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8), Power 180	18	9
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	43.6	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	1.25
Computer	Computer/15	—	2
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Particle Barbettes x2	10	16
Systems	Probe Drones (20 probes)	4	2
	Repair Drones	2	0.4
Accommodation	Pod-Clusters x2	40	10
	Ceremonial Space, Minor (capacity 12)	18	4.5
Common Areas		12	1.2
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Virtual Crew/0	—	—
	Library	—	—
Cargo		9	—

TOTAL: MCR 107.35

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X2, GUNNERS X2

RUNNING COSTS

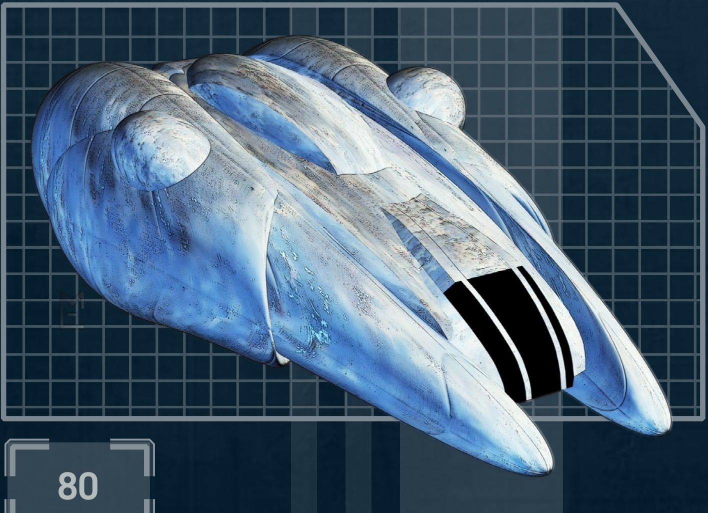
MAINTENANCE COST
Cr8946/month

• • • • •

PURCHASE COST
MCr107.35

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	FUEL PROCESSOR	JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS
45	40	—	40	2	30



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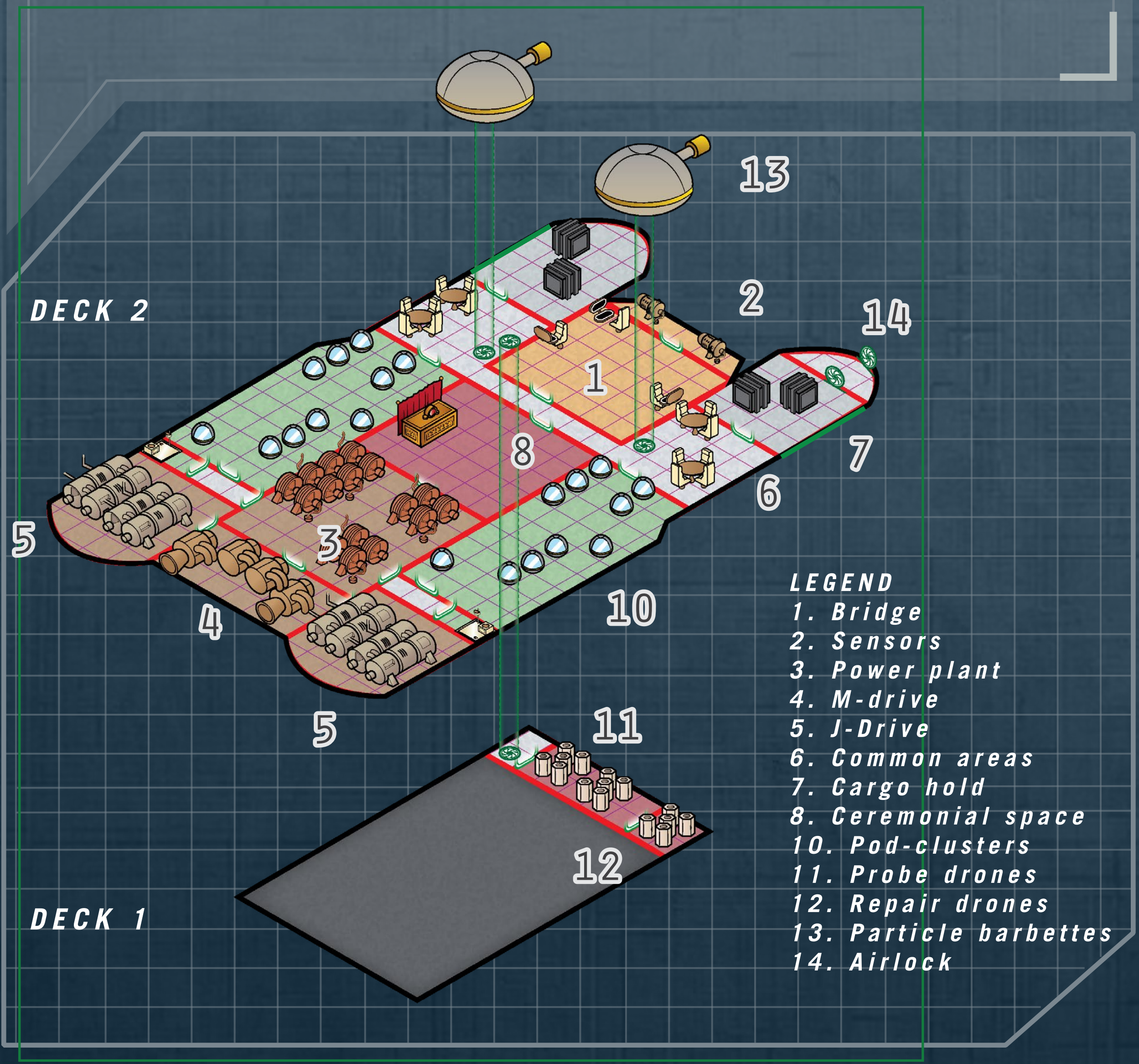
HULL POINTS

The *Siyoparttwi*-type, as non-Droyne observers designate vessels of this sort, is named after the first example encountered. It is more commonly referred to as a 'Droyne Scout', although there are several vessels that fit this rather loose designation.

The *Siyoparttwi* is a utilitarian craft normally employed by Sports or small groups of Droyne to carry out communications, diplomatic and reconnaissance missions. Examples have also been sighted in the hands of a Kroyloss and even orphaned Droyne, making this one of the most common Droyne vessels encountered by outsiders and also possibly creating a false impression of Droyne culture.



LEGEND
1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. J-Drive
6. Common areas
7. Cargo hold
8. Ceremonial space
10. Pod-clusters
11. Probe drones
12. Repair drones
13. Particle barbettes
14. Airlock

Hull form is a utilitarian rounded wedge, although the hull itself it usually decorated in a style pleasing to the owning Oytrip. The bridge is a typical control space, unlike the ship-hearts of larger vessels, located slightly forward of the centre of the vessel, with the ceremonial space immediately aft of it. This is the crossroads of the ship, with accommodation areas to the flanks and engineering spaces aft. The small cargo area lies at the front of the wedge and can be used as an accessway into the ship.

Performance is not outstanding but the Siyoparttwi-type can make a two-parsec jump and is relatively quick in-system. It is better armed than many vessels of a similar size, with two dorsally mounted particle accelerator barbettes, reflecting the Droyne preference for energy weapons and long-range combat. The vessel can accommodate up to 12 Droyne but would normally operate with a crew of eight. Some or even most of these can be replaced by a Virtual Crew software suite if the ship is to be operated by a lone Sport.

Standard complement is a Leader who functions as captain and astrogator, a pilot who would usually be a Warrior, and two Technicians who maintain the ship and operate its complex systems. Two additional Warriors are required if the weapons are to be manned. These crewmembers would normally be supported by a Drone and a Worker. The ship may carry one or more Sports and perhaps additional Workers or Drones, depending on the mission and the importance of its Leader.

MERCANTILE EXPEDITION VESSEL

TENENTSYO-TYPE

TL12		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	700 tons, Auspicious of Communicating	14	175
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient x2)	14	35
Jump Drive	Jump 2 (energy efficient)	40	66
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 360	24	24
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	144.8	—
Bridge	Ship-Heart Chamber	37	7
Computer	Core/40	—	45
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Double Turrets (pulse lasers) x4	4	10
Systems	Repair Drones	7	1.4
	Medical Bays x2	8	4
Accommodation	Pod-Clusters x4	80	20
	Ceremonial Space, Major (capacity 24)	68	136
	Low Berths x12	6	0.3
Common Areas		40	4
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Virtual Crew/0	—	1
	Library	—	—
Cargo		211	—

TOTAL: MCr 533

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X3, GUNNERS X4

RUNNING COSTS

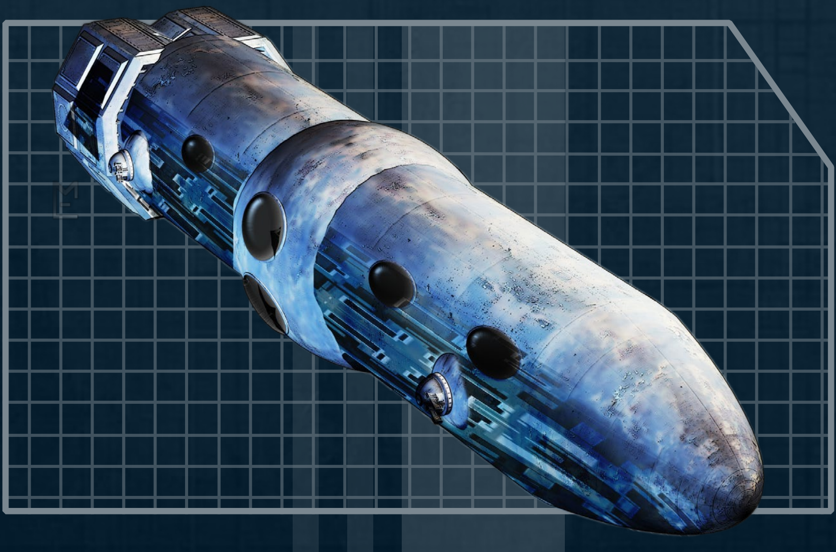
MAINTENANCE COST
Cr44417/month

• • • • •

PURCHASE COST
MCr533

POWER REQUIREMENTS

70	140	4
MANOEUVRE DRIVE	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS
105	**2**	**36**
JUMP DRIVE	SENSORS	WEAPONS



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HULL POINTS

The *Tenentsyo* Mercantile Expedition Vessel is, like many other Droyne ships, named in outsider databases for the first known example of the type. Its designation translates from Oynprith as 'Mercantile Expedition Vessel' – not so much a trader as a vessel used by a Leader to make deals on behalf of the Oytrip. The fabulously decorated hull will impress anyone and to its crew it is a guarantee of effective communications and auspicious deals. Computer capability is large, enabling a variety of applications to be run in support of the vessel's mission.

Hull form is cylindrical, with accommodation forward on the upper deck and engineering spaces aft. In the centre of the ship is a combined ceremonial and ship-heart chamber, two decks high and thoroughly wasteful of space by the standards of most races. However, this chamber is the heart of the ship's mission. It is where the Leader commands their crew and the members of the expedition, where they conducts their business in the correct surroundings and where rituals to make deals more auspicious are held. Without this chamber, this would be just another cargo hold with a jump drive; with one, it is an extension of the Oytrip.

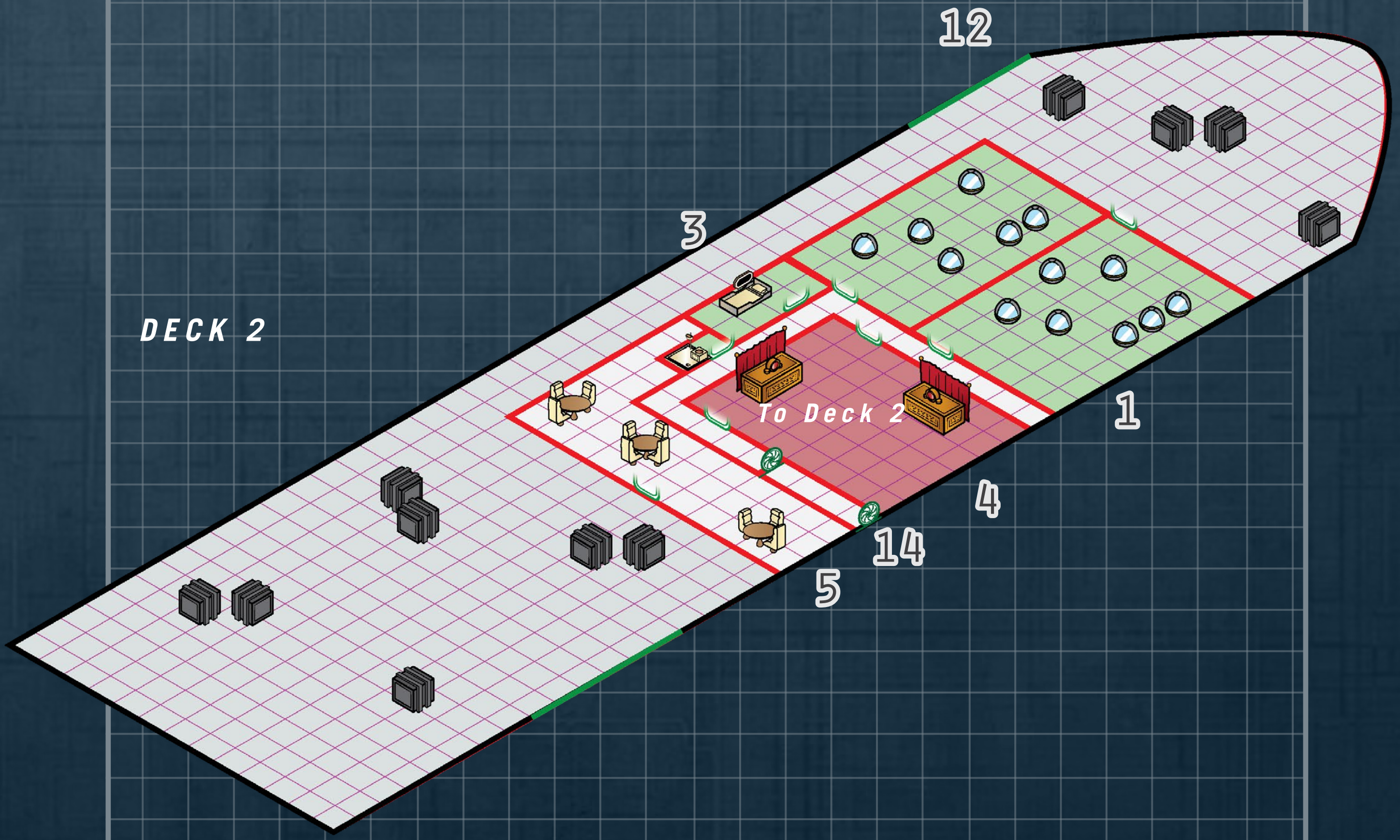
The vessel is designed to land at its destination, where everyone can see its splendour, and favoured trading partners will be invited into the ceremonial chamber at the heart of the ship. The cargo bays can be entered from the lower part of this chamber, allowing the Leader to show off the Oytrip's goods. Visitors are not allowed forward or aft on the upper deck and on some ships there are no access points at lower-deck level. Droyne with suitable wings can fly up to the entry points; anyone else would have to disable internal gravity.

The *Tenentsyo*-type Mercantile Expedition Vessel is lightly armed and may carry parties of Warriors or Workers in its low berths if the mission requires it. More commonly it runs with a Leader and a suitable set of attendants. This complement can vary but a typical mercantile mission might use the following configuration:

- Mission Leader (Leader-of Leaders)
- 2–3 Emissaries (Sports)
- Ship Leader (Leader)
- Pilot (Warrior)
- 3 Engineers (Technician)
- Crew Manager/Steward (Social Drone)
- 4 Gunners (Warriors)
- Ritual Overseer (Priestly Drone)
- 2 Ritual Performers (Drone)
- 4 General Performers-of-Tasks (Worker)

This gives a typical complement of around 20 Droyne, which is sufficient to permit long voyages away from the Oytrip. Vessels of this sort might also be used for exploration or to conduct routine diplomatic visits but for the most part they combine commerce and diplomacy in the region within a few parsecs of their home Oytrip.

DECK 2


12
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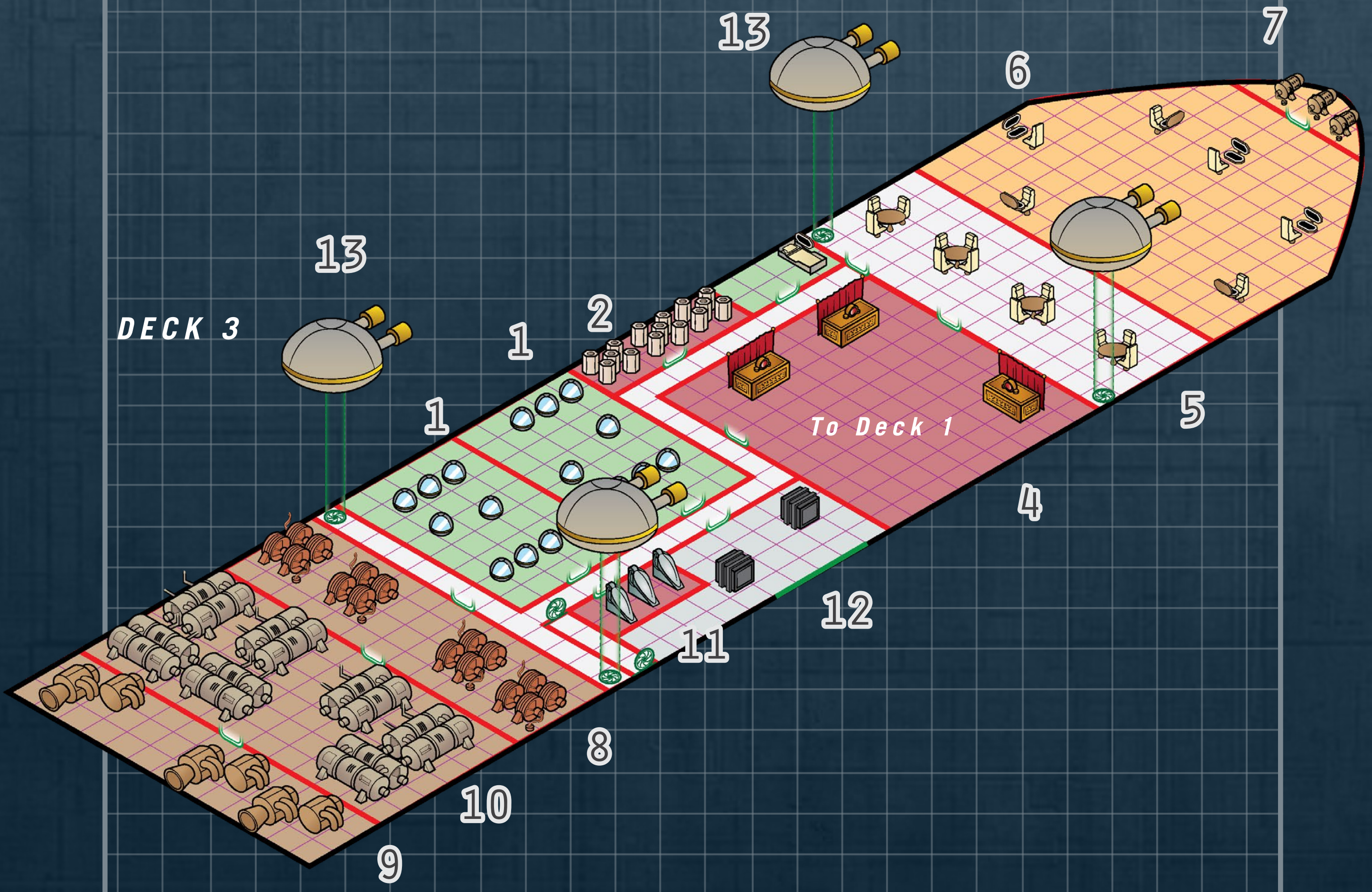
LEGEND
1. Pod-clusters
2. Repair drones
3. Med bays
4. Ceremonial space
5. Common areas

DECK 1 – FUEL ONLY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DECK 3
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To Deck 1
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LEGEND

6. Bridge
7. Sensors
8. Power plant
9. M-drive
10. J-Drive
11. Low berths
12. Cargo hold
13. Double turrets
14. Airlocks

MILITARY EXPEDITION VESSEL

YUBOTSIO-TYPE

TL13		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	1,200 tons, Droyne Hull	—	120
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 6	90	57.6
M-Drive	Thrust 6 (energy efficient)	72	158.4
Jump Drive	Jump 2 (energy efficient x2)	65	121.875
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 1200	80	80
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	256	—
Bridge	Ship-Heart Citadel	52	15
Computer	Core/40	—	45
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Medium Particle Bays x2	200	80
	Fusion Gun Barbettes x4	20	16
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x6	6	24
	Nuclear Dampers x2	20	20
Systems	Repair Drones	12	2.4
	Medical Bays x2	8	4
Accommodation	Pod-Clusters x12	240	80
	Ceremonial Citadel, Capacity 12	24	18
	Low Berths x36	18	0.9
Common Areas		30	0.3
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Virtual Crew/1	—	5
	Virtual Gunner/1	—	5
	Library	—	—
Cargo		5	—

TOTAL: MCR 533

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X7, MAINTENANCE X2, GUNNERS X14, OFFICER

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr73564.58/month

• • • • •

PURCHASE COST
MCr882.775

POWER REQUIREMENTS

MANOEUVRE DRIVE	540
BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS	240
SYSTEMS	6
JUMP DRIVE	120
SENSORS	2
WEAPONS	288

HULL POINTS	480

The *Yubotsio*-type is used for a variety of military and naval purposes. It is capable of acting as a transport for ground troops or as a naval patrol ship. Much larger vessels are deployed by some Oytripin but this class is common among those that require only escorts for their diplomatic and trading ships plus the occasional expedition into potentially hostile territory.

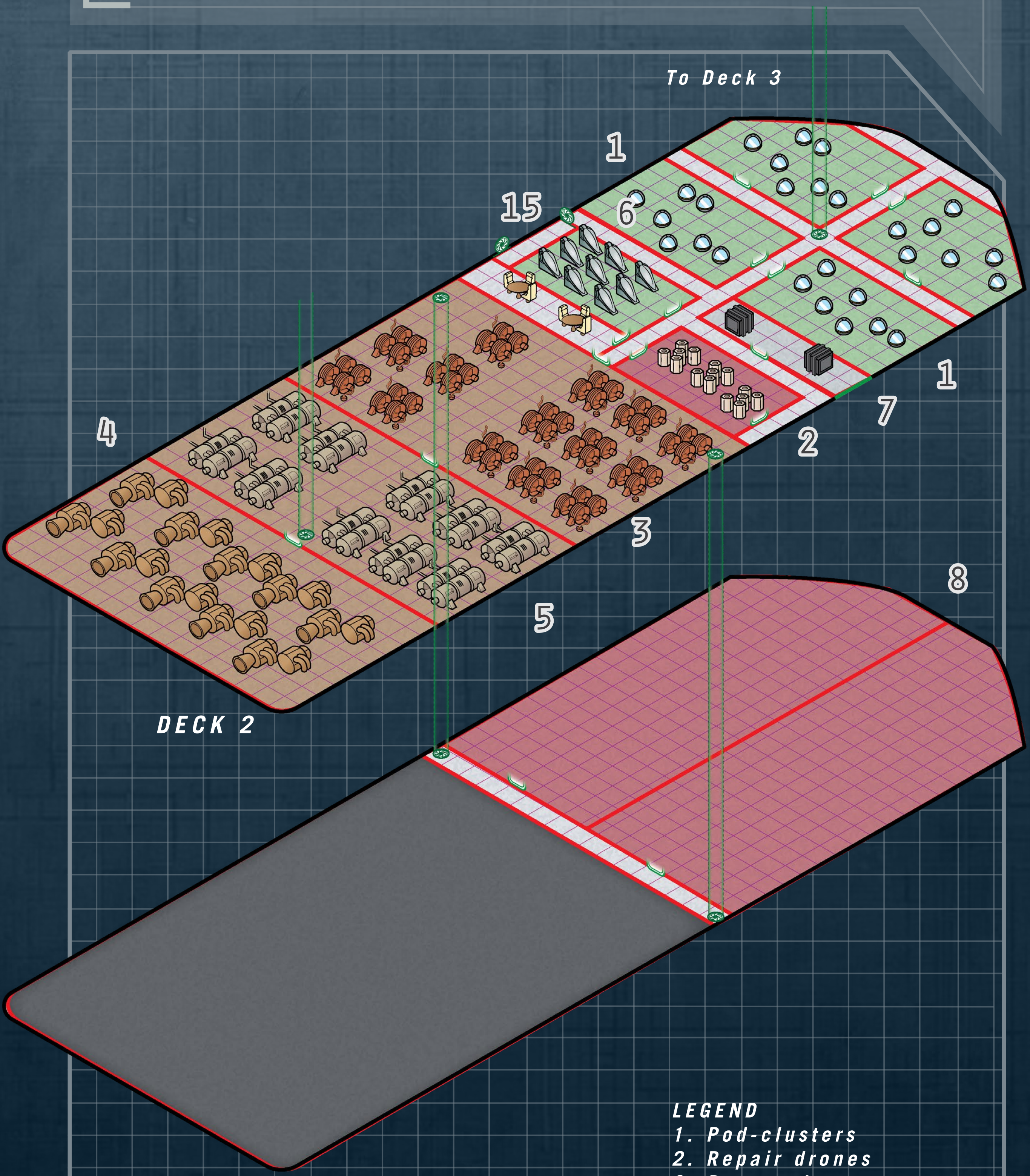
The vessel uses a rounded, flattened-cylinder hull, with command spaces located at its heart. These are co-located with the ceremonial chamber and together these make an armoured 'citadel' in the centre of the ship where crewmembers can shelter in the event of heavy damage. Forward of the command chamber on the upper deck is a set of six pod-clusters for the use of the crew.

A vessel of this type typically runs with a crew of exactly 36 commanded by a Leader-of-Leaders rather than a Leader-of-Warriors as it is not a pure warship. A ship intended only to fight might be crewed entirely by Warriors but this is an 'expedition' vessel, which protects the interests of its Oytrip by projecting power but may find non-military solutions to the problems it encounters. Thus the crew contains numerous Warriors as gunners and pilots but also Technicians to run the drives, Drones to ensure a harmonious crew and to conduct the proper rituals to ensure mission success and Workers to support them. Sports may be carried as negotiators, scouts and infiltrators.

Forward of the command spaces on the lower deck is another pod-cluster chamber, this one normally used by a complement of up to 36 Warriors. Such a unit is typically termed a Fighting Group and is commanded by a Leader-of-Warriors. Another 36 personnel, usually Warriors, can be carried in low berths. Aft of the command spaces are drive and engineering spaces, as well as fuel tanks and the tiny cargo hold.

Armament reflects a preference for long-range combat and energy weapons, with two bay-mounted particle accelerators. These are backed up by a laser battery for small-craft engagements and fusion gun barbettes in case of close action. Ideally, this can be avoided using the vessel's respectable agility and standard tactics call for a long-range engagement if at all possible.

Employment of these vessels ranges from patrol and escort work to raids on enemy territory. A Yubotsio can deploy two Fighting Groups of warriors, given time to wake half the complement, but lacks the small craft for a rapid assault. It is not uncommon for one Fighting Group to be dropped from the ship to glide into action using their own or a mechanical set of wings, covering the landing and deployment of the second group. Whilst an Oytrip may have many powerful warships, it is small vessels like this one that deal with minor problems and so are far more likely to be encountered than a larger ship.


To Deck 3
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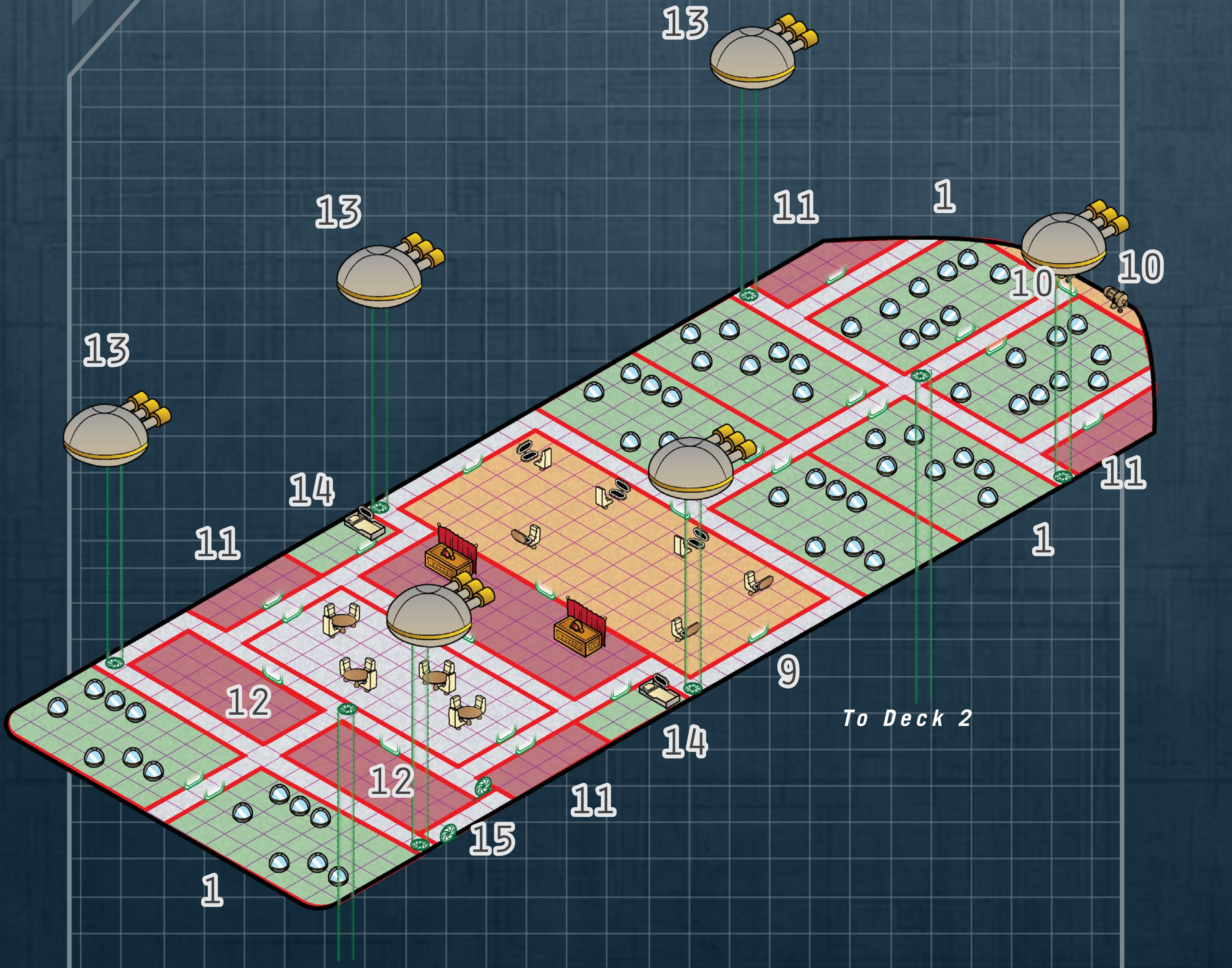
DECK 2
DECK 1

LEGEND
1. Pod-clusters
2. Repair drones
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. J-Drive
6. Low berths
7. Cargo hold
8. Medium particle bays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DECK 3

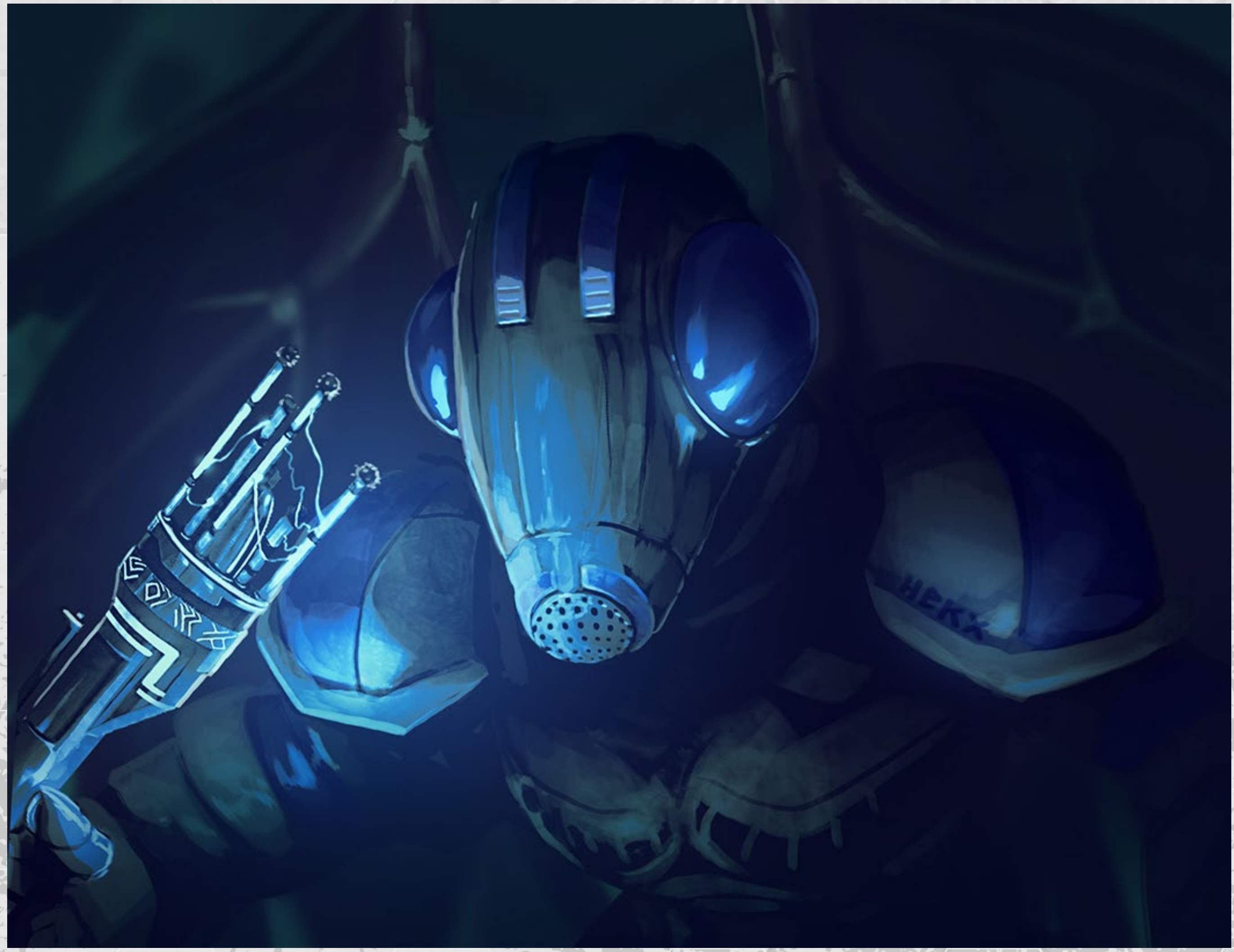
LEGEND
9. Bridge
10. Sensors
11. Fusion gun barbettes
12. Nuclear dampers
13. Triple turrets
14. Med bay
15. Airlocks

DROYNE

Most devices and equipment made for Droyne are smaller and lighter than those intended for larger sophonts. Droyne will struggle to use weapons and tools made for humans, for example. This is not always a consideration of weight or bulk; often the proportions of a device or the position of controls can be a real problem for beings with shorter arms and smaller hands. The converse is also true; humans generally find it difficult to operate Droyne equipment. DM-2 applies to all tasks require fine control of an item made for another species. This includes combat and delicate tasks but even something as simple as using a sensor device becomes tricky under pressure or when speed is essential. The DM can be waived at the referee's discretion.

DROYNE WEAPONRY

Weapon preferences vary from one Oytrip to another. Low and mid-tech Oytripin have little choice whether to use conventional hand weapons and firearms but higher-tech communities seem biased towards energy weapons. This is by no means universal but lasers tend to suit the smaller frame of the Droyne. Those Oytrips that do prefer firearms tend to deploy weapons that might be considered carbines or even submachineguns by other races. Small calibres are favoured, reducing recoil and overall weight. The majority of these weapons are functionally the same as those used by human species. Some exceptions are detailed here.



A03/48956

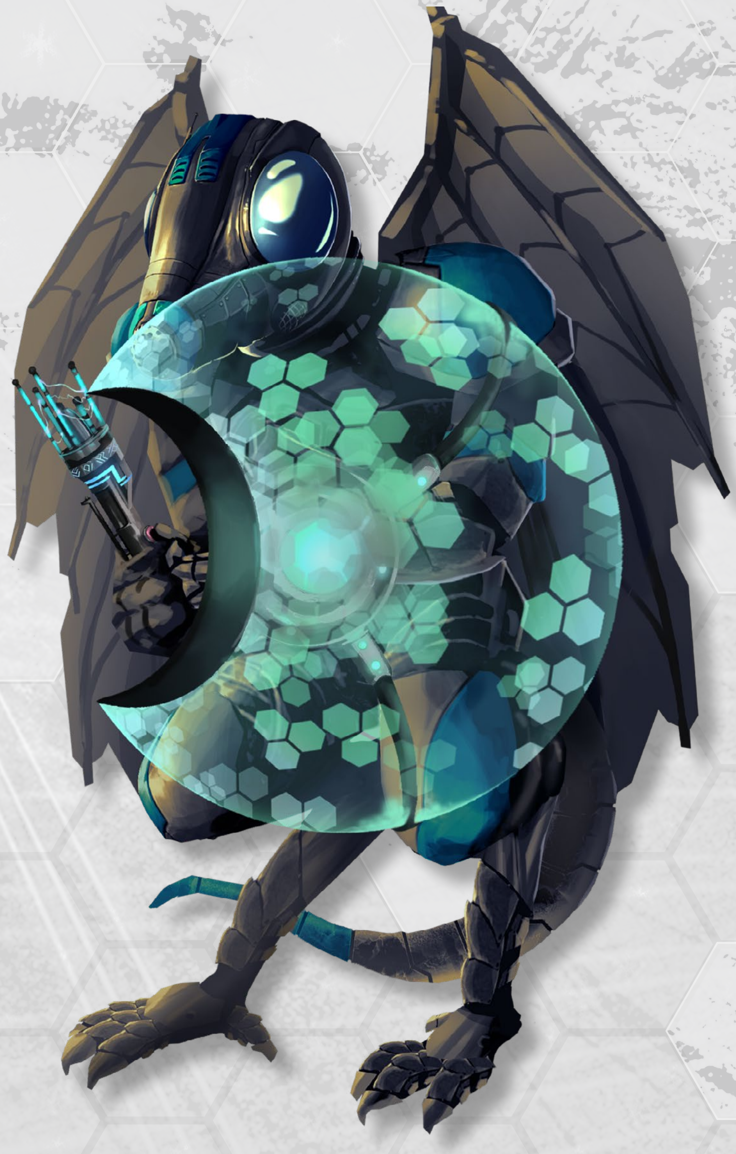
ECLIPSE SHIELD

The eclipse shield is a large but lightweight shield carried by some Warriors. It is said to resemble a planet in partial eclipse, with a crescent shaped primary edge extending well beyond the user's flank and a concave secondary edge. This permits a Warrior to use a firearm in the other hand, turning their body to receive protection then angling back to shoot. Eclipse shields are almost always near-transparent, giving observers the impression of a shimmering 'force-field' protecting their owners.

Eclipse shields are not intended for close combat, although they will serve if necessary. Their role is to stop projectiles and energy weapon discharges. Most are produced in a right-handed design but a large complement of Warriors may have some left-handed shield users to cover the opposite flank. In melee combat, an eclipse shield functions as a normal shield but against firearms the user is treated as being in cover (Protection +8, as shown on page 74 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*). A second Droyne can shelter behind the shield of another but cannot make attacks without moving out from its cover.

In addition, an eclipse shield has a small power cell and a layer of microcircuitry set into its outer face. This is often used to project a bright light from the front face of the shield, which extends a little way above and below the normal visual spectrum. This has the effect of dazzling thermal and optical sensors, and providing illumination of a target. The light is unidirectional, so even if the shield is transparent the user is not dazzled. In low-light conditions this imposes DM-2 to attack rolls made against those behind the shield.

Bright light drains the power cell in an hour or so but a comfortable level of illumination can be maintained for weeks. The circuitry can also act as a heat exchanger for a limited time. It can be expended in a single pulse, reducing the damage from an incoming energy or cold attack by 1D. Thereafter it is useful only as a physical shield. More commonly, the shield's hot/cold capability is used to augment the comfort and gravitas of a Leader. A group of warriors standing around a Leader can modify local conditions to maintain a comfortable temperature within the ring of shields. This requires at least four shields forming a ring, with shields no more than two metres apart. Enough eclipse shields can protect a large group from a storm or freezing conditions for several hours.

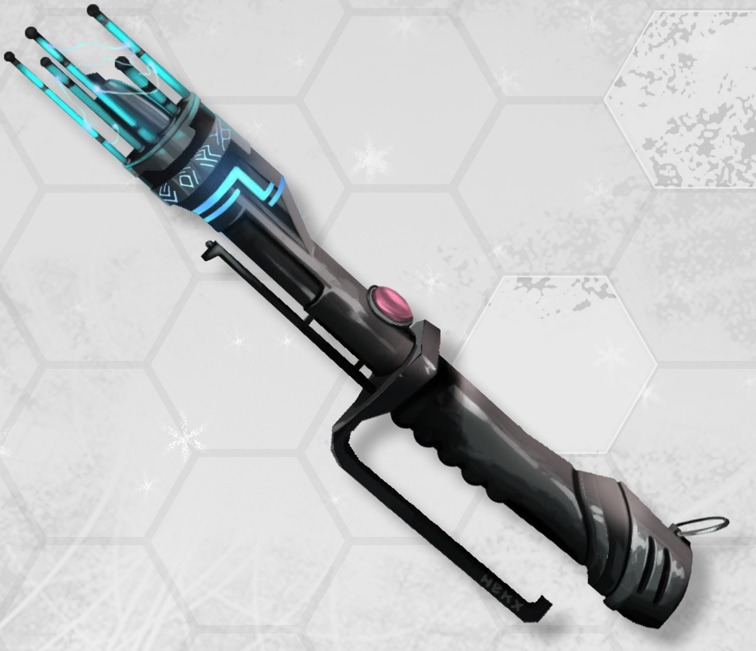


Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Traits
Eclipse-Shield	12	—	1D	2	Cr20000	—

A11/58231 LEADER-ROD

Some Droyne Leaders carry a short rod, or baton, apparently as a badge of office. These leader-rods are beautifully decorated with patterns that indicate the Leader's status and career history and in some cases serve other purposes too. A leader-rod is conferred rather than bought; the price indicated is what such a device might bring on the collector market.

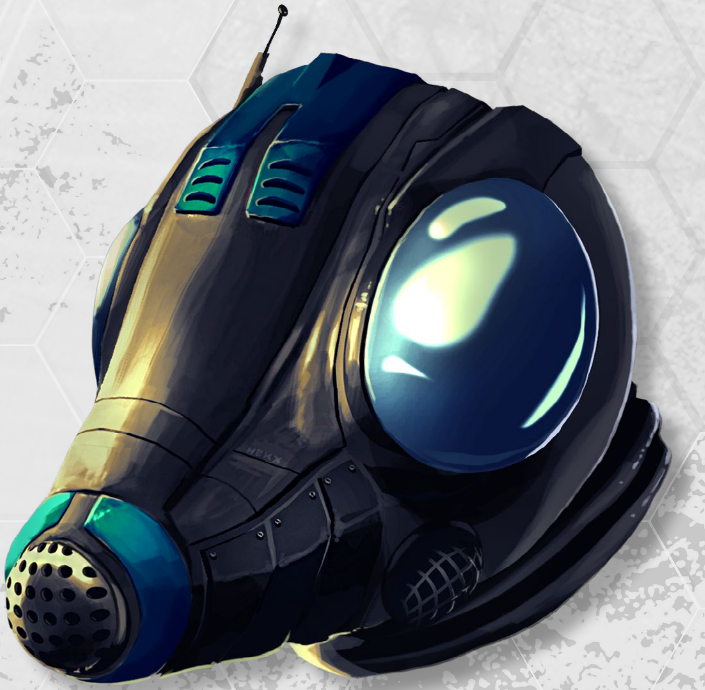
Mid-tech leader-rods are likely to be no more than what they seem but higher-tech Oytrips build multiple functions into their Leaders' batons. All are psionically triggered, with no external controls. The rod will usually have a communications device built in and a holographic projector that can be used to display maps or other information. There is also a laser capable of being used as a designator or a weapon. In designator mode the internal power cell is good for days of use without recharging but the rod can only deliver 20 shots with the laser before being depleted. A Leader who fires their weapon is probably in desperate trouble anyway; any situation where they need more than a couple of shots means all their Warriors are down and they are almost certainly doomed.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Leader-Rod	12	25	3D	1	Cr150000	20	—	Zero-G

DROYNE ARMOUR

Droyne use similar body armour to other races, although tailored rather differently. Most armour includes armoured wing cases, which preclude the use of wings even if the Droyne is strong enough to fly in heavy armour. Droyne use their wings to assist in balance, so basic armour that covers and protects them causes problems with mobility. A Droyne using basic combat armour or any sort of rigid torso protection suffers DM-1 on all checks that require movement or balance. More expensive body armour either allows the wings to move freely or encases them in a powered covering that mimics their movements.



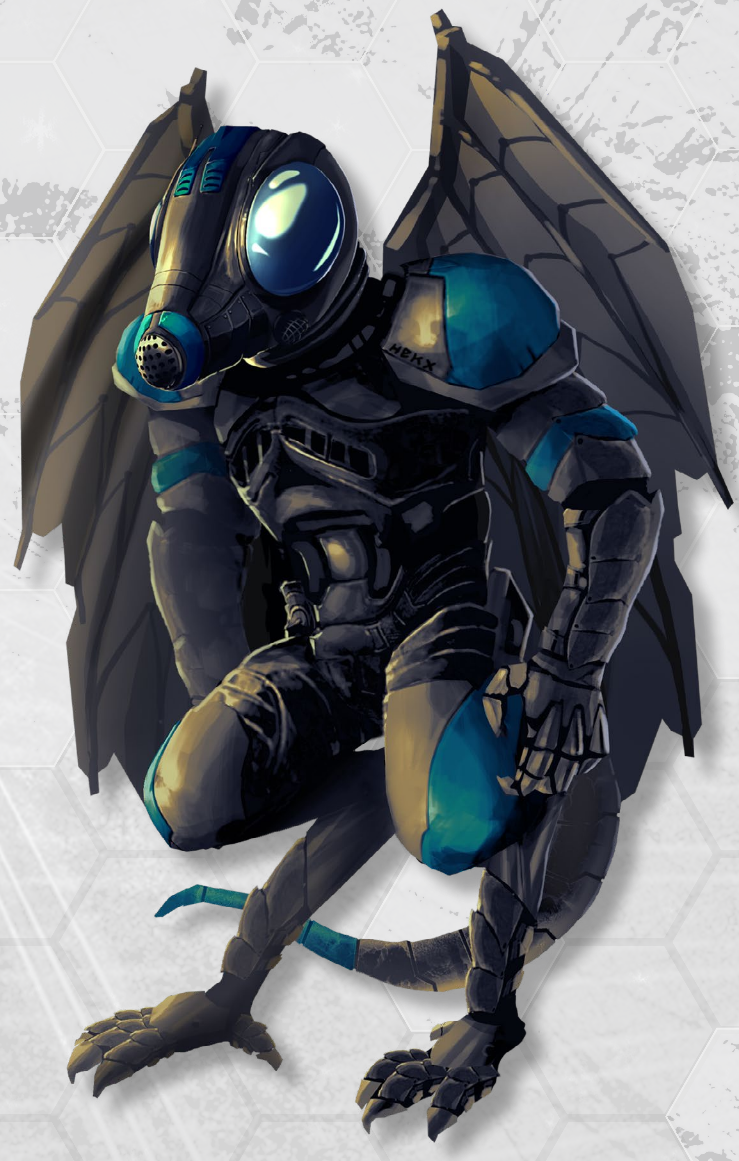
A11/58231 FIGHTING-ARMOUR

Fighting-armour is the Droyne equivalent of combat armour but incorporates a mechanism for mimicking the movement of wings. It thus does not impose a penalty on checks requiring balance. In addition, a Droyne equipped with fighting-armour can unfurl their wings to slow a descent. It is not possible to fly wearing this armour without additional thrust but a gliding airborne assault can be made from a starship or suitably high position.

The armour itself is very similar to standard combat armour. It has a flexible base layer with rigid armour plates over it, life support and cooling systems, and tactical displays. Power cells are good for 24 hours of operation. This is longer than most races could stand being encased in armour but if the suit is donned with the right ceremony a Warrior's mental resilience is boosted sufficiently to make long-duration operations tolerable.

Standard fighting-armour can be augmented with one or both of two accessories. The first is a short-duration thrust pack. This is a cheap chemical-based device held in a canister with a protector plate to prevent the exhaust gases from burning the user. It gives a total of one minute of thrust sufficient to allow a running take-off from level ground. There is no throttle; the canister burns a packet of chemicals and delivers one round of full thrust each time it is activated. Level flight requires one burn every other round; a glide from greater altitude requires one burn every three rounds. Once fuel is expended the Droyne can make a controlled fall but cannot maintain a glide for more than a few seconds. A thrust pack costs Cr100 and is likely to be available in large numbers.

The second accessory is essentially the innards of a grav belt, mounted into receptacles on the armour. The unit costs Cr60000 and cannot be used without the armour. When in place the belt allows up to four hours of flight before it needs recharging. These are not standard issue for most Droyne Warriors but when they are used it is typical to use the grav unit to get into position close to a target then shut it off and glide/fall onto the enemy. This reduces electromagnetic signature and increases speed.

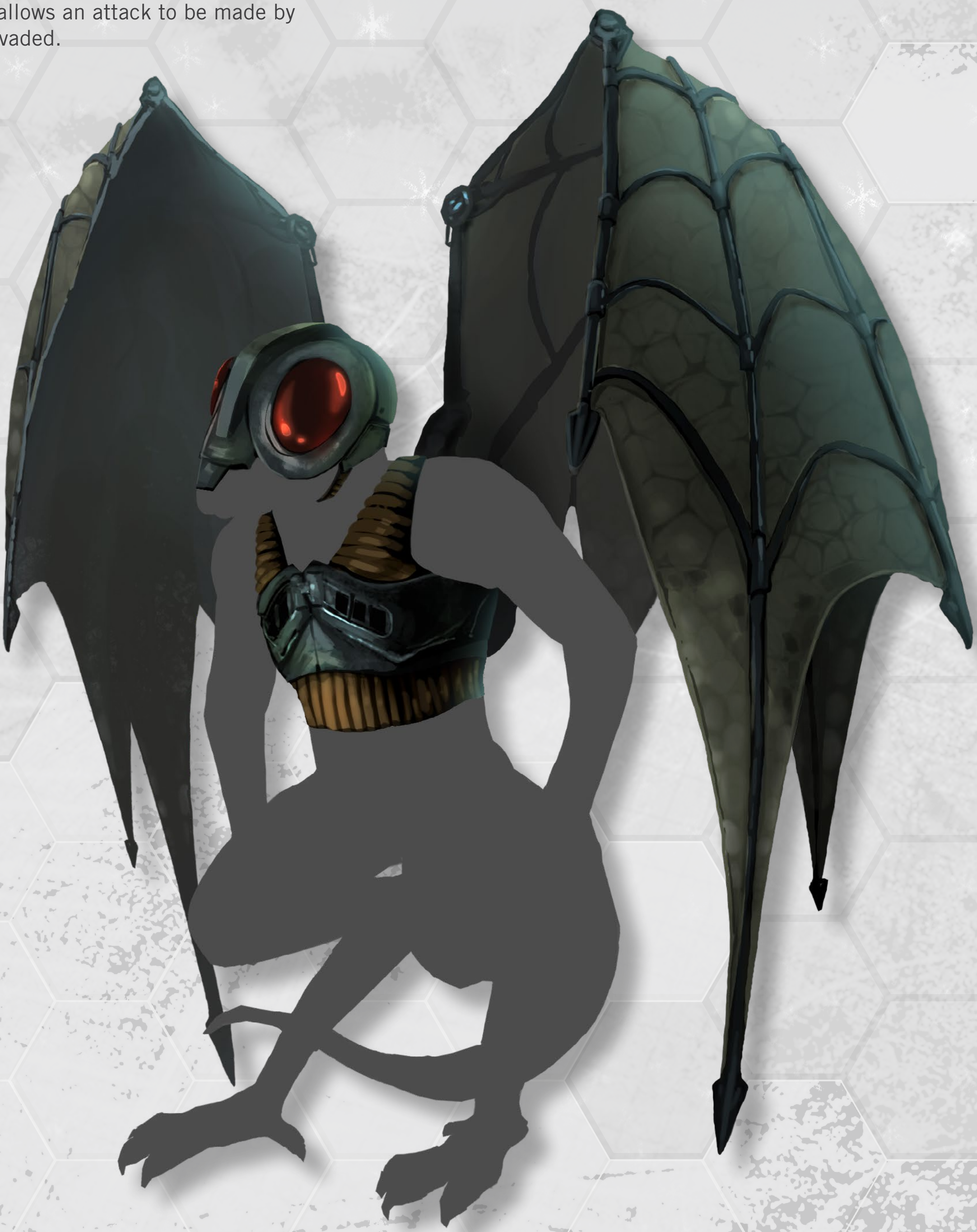


Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Fighting-Armour	+15	12	130	14	Cr92000	Vacc Suit 0

A11/58231

FLYING-ARMOUR

Flying-armour is composed of a light but highly resilient fabric stretched between rods that mostly parallel major bones. It includes a solid helmet. Flying-armour allows normal use of the wings, which are unprotected, and is primarily intended to protect against the effects of crashing into foliage or similar obstacles. Particularly daredevil Droyne will sometimes crash headlong through small branches, opening their wings at the last second. Although risky, this allows an attack to be made by surprise or pursuit evaded.



Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Flying-Armour	+3	10	0	3	Cr45000	None

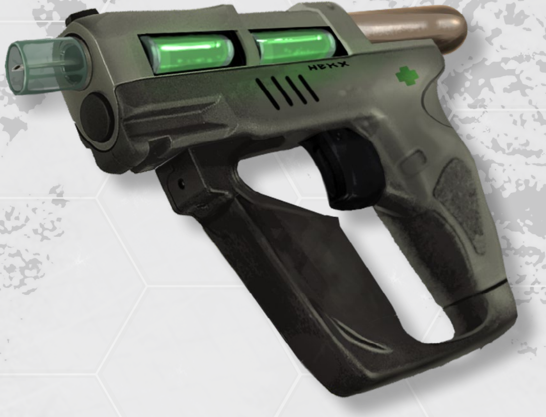
FLIGHT AIDS

Flight is unimportant in some Droyne Oytripin, whereas others have a culture where personal flight is part of daily life and may even be necessary to access some parts of the Oytrip. Those without the necessary attributes can obtain artificial assistance.

A03/48956

FLIGHT DRUG

Flight drug doubles END and STR for the purposes of determine how long a Droyne can fly, if at all. It will be effective for around an hour. At the end of this time the Droyne must make an Average (8+) END check using its unenhanced END. If successful, the Droyne is tired but can continue to take normal actions, including continued flight with another dose of the drug. If the check is failed, the Droyne becomes exhausted; STR and END are reduced by 1D points each, which are recovered at the rate of one per hour of rest or light activity. DM-2 applies to the END check for every dose after the first and DM-4 applies if flight drug was used before STR and END had recovered from a previous bout of exhaustion.

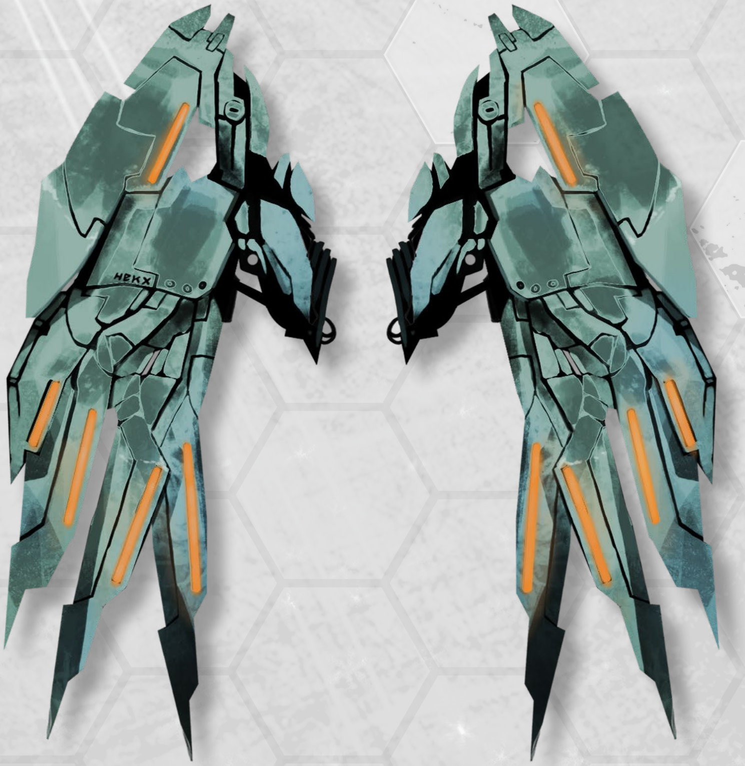


Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Flight Drug	6	—	Cr1500

A03/75674

MECHANICAL WINGS

Droyne whose wings are too small to fly under their own power can use a set of mechanical wings. These become available at TL7 and remain similar in function at all Tech Levels. A wing set allows the user to glide from a high point to a lower one unless the Droyne has greater than STR 6 and Flying 2 or better. If these prerequisites are met, normal flight can be achieved. A set of wings must be tailored to a specific individual.



Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Mechanical Wings	7	0.5	Cr100

RITUAL AND PSIONIC ITEMS

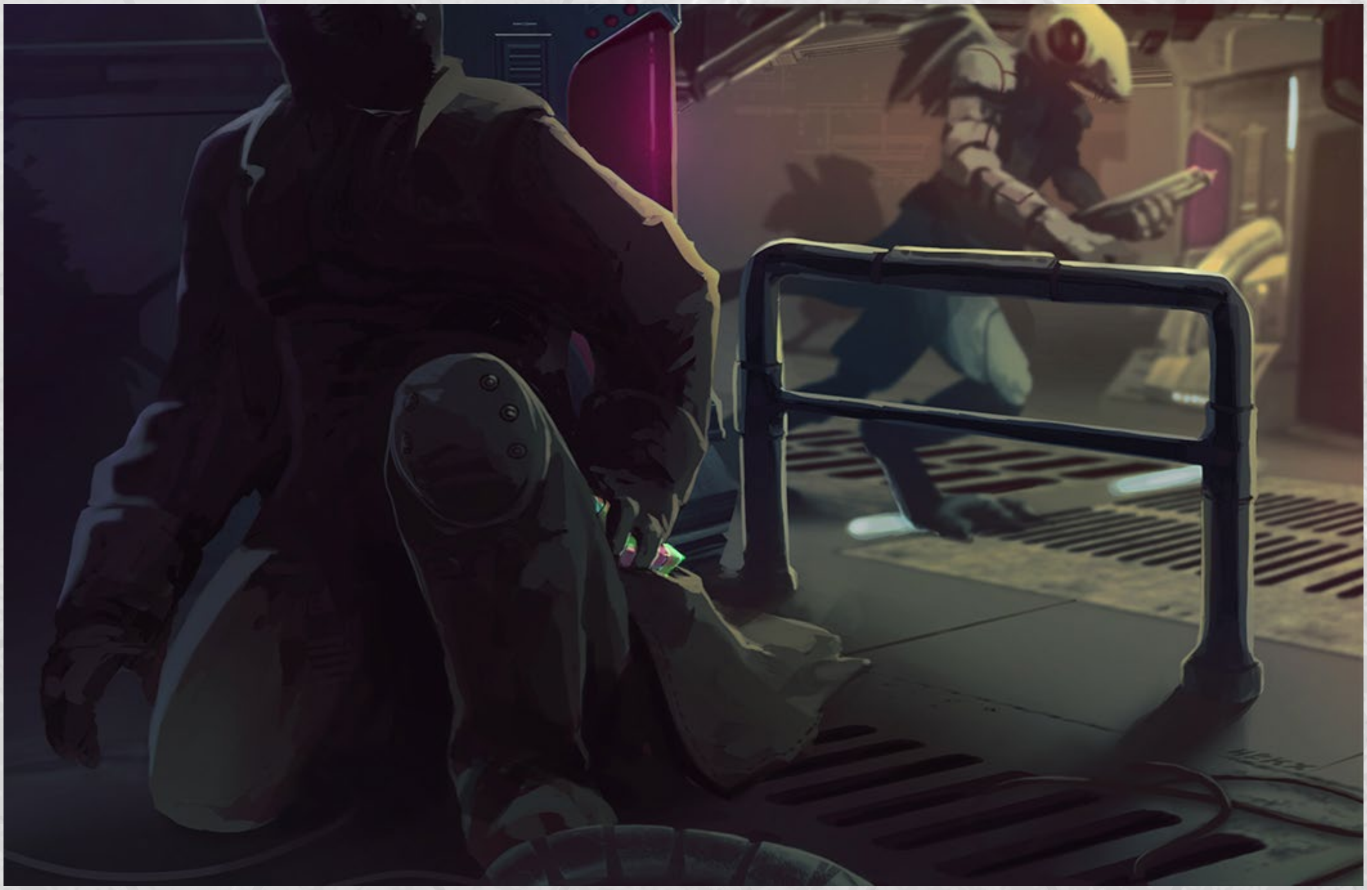
There is considerable overlap between ritual and psionic items and practices in Droyne society and it is not always clear where one ends and the other begins. Droyne ritual items fetch considerable sums on the collectors' market in some areas. This is not least because they are so carefully guarded. Indeed, someone known to have stolen items of ceremonial significance will be hunted without regard to laws or territorial boundaries. However, the Droyne are not so single-minded as to plough ahead no matter what. They will engage outsiders to make a retrieval or punish the miscreant, or may launch a covert strike. Direct action is more likely than a legal challenge in most cases, although an emissary may be sent to ask the Leaders (whomever that is perceived to be) of the thief's community to return the stolen items.

Small items such as statuary or robes, personal decorative items and the like typically fetch Cr100–500. However, provenance is always a factor. An item proven to have come from a famous Oytrip or associated with major events can sell for millions of Credits, although there will always be far more fakes than real items. As might be expected, Droyne relics are difficult to obtain due to their lack of interaction with outsiders. There will always be a few people who think they can sneak or bribe their way in to steal something of value or who will follow a party of Droyne around demanding they sell their regalia.

Very few items appear on the open market. Even if they are salvaged from a starship and legally owned under interstellar law, most Droyne artefacts are considered to remain the property of the Oytrip. Those that understand such things may try to buy back legitimately salvaged items but forcible recovery is still likely. Thus valuers and experts willing to determine the provenance of items tend to operate in secret, with a web of contacts to keep time-wasters and law enforcers away.

Psionic Drugs

Droyne make routine use of psionics-related drugs. It is not clear if these are safe or effective for use by other races, nor if there are multiple recipes. This seems likely, since widely separated Droyne communities are not guaranteed to have access to the same ingredients. The effects of Droyne psi-drugs are similar to those described on page 203 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook.*



CHAPTER-TWENTY ONE

DROYNE TRAVELLERS

Playing a Droyne can be quite a challenge. For the most part Droyne are driven to be part of a community with other Droyne, to the point where they will commit ritual suicide if driven out or otherwise deprived of the company of their Oytrip. One solution to this problem is for the Travellers to play a group of Droyne sent to carry out some mission or for a lone Traveller to play a Sport who intends to return home when their task is complete.

Young Droyne normally transfer to a different family within their extended family group but it is not unknown for one to transfer to an entirely different Oytrip. A Droyne Traveller might have become lost or detached during this process and may wander for a time before reaching their destination and settling down. The Droyne might also be a member of a Kroyloss or fraternity. A Kroyloss would normally be a group of other Droyne but events might cause the Droyne Traveller to feel a sense of belonging with a group of non-Droyne. This would certainly be an unusual situation that might provide for adventure ideas later in the campaign.

Alternatively, a Traveller can play a Droyne who has been driven from or lost their Oytrip. The latter is a traumatic event, which might be a plot point in subsequent adventures. Most Droyne would commit suicide through the Krinaytsyu ritual but some – known as Krinaytsyuni – do not feel the urge to do so or have some goal that must be accomplished before they can die. These may be tortured individuals or may have psychological problems, but the way they manifest will be different to other species. A loner Droyne might be a very strange individual, or may suppress everything along with the desire to depart their lonely existence.

Anyone choosing to play a Droyne must keep in mind that they do not think or act like humans. Nor do they fit in seats made for humans. Devices may be too big for them to comfortably hold or use. A lone Droyne will stand out where people are familiar with them and any Droyne will stand out where they are not well known. Playing a Droyne is likely to be challenging but could be an interesting experience for the Traveller – and all their companions.

DROYNE FLIGHT

The wings grown by Droyne vary in their proportions. In many individuals they are vestigial and cannot support flight under any circumstances. Other Droyne have wings large enough to permit flight in some conditions and to act as a gliding aid in others.

When determining the wing size for a given Droyne, roll 1D. On 1–3 the Droyne has vestigial wings. On 4–5 the Droyne has small wings, and on 6 they have large wings.

If a Traveller really wants to be able to fly, they may add enough points to the value rolled to get the wings they want but must subtract that number of points from any combination of STR, DEX and END. A Droyne with vestigial wings can still fly with the aid of a mechanical wing set.

A Droyne with large wings (or using a mechanical wing set) can fly on a world of Size 5 or less with a Standard atmosphere and on a world of Size 7 or less with a Dense atmosphere. Small wings allow flight on worlds one Size code smaller. It is possible to make a short glide or to slow a fall using wings on worlds two Size codes larger than one where flight would be possible and to do so on a world with a Thin atmosphere of Size 4 or less. A glide or controlled fall must be in a downward direction, with no more than two metres of lateral movement for every three metres downward. Gliding uses the Flight skill (see page 188). Falling under control can use the Flight or Athletics (dexterity) skill.

STR 4+ is required to be able to fly, no matter how large the Droyne's wings may be. If the Droyne is injured and STR drops below 4, they will be unable to fly but may be able to make an emergency landing. A Droyne can fly quickly and engage in manoeuvres for a number of combat rounds equal to their END, after which they become fatigued (see page 76 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*). Distance-covering flight can be maintained for five minutes per point of END before becoming fatigued.

Fast or combat flight takes place at speeds of up to 30 kilometres per hour, Speed Band Very Slow or around 50 metres per combat round. This is halved in cluttered conditions such as a forest or the inside of a space station. Steady distance-covering flight averages around 10 kilometres per hour or Speed Band Idle.

Flight

The Flight skill governs the use of Droyne wings to fly or control a fall and can be used in unusual situations with the Referee's permission. For example, a Droyne might 'fly' instead of using standard microgravity manoeuvres. This is tricky, and would require some high-difficulty Flight skill checks unless the Droyne has experience of this sort of thing, but it could be done.

More commonly, Flight skill is used to carry out manoeuvres with precision or grace. Landing is Routine (6+) under most circumstances but making an emergency landing without coming to harm is more tricky. The check would be Average (8+) at least and possibly higher if the Droyne is struggling with adverse conditions. A Droyne whose END has dropped to zero whilst flying fast around a set of crags in a gusty wind will face a check of Difficult (10+) level or more, suffering 1D damage for every point of negative Effect.

Flight skill also limits what the Droyne can do whilst flying. A flying Droyne can never receive a DM higher than their Flight skill level to carry out any physical task, including striking with a weapon. The best sniper in Charted Space will be impaired by their flapping wings, air currents and minor disturbances in relative motion path.

OTHER DROYNE SKILLS

In addition to Flight, Droyne have access to skills no other race uses. They are also highly unlikely to learn or use certain skills, known as termed Black Skills. These can be learned in unusual circumstances but a Droyne who knows them will always be on the fringe of the Oytrip's society. They are still part of the community but are 'not quite right' in some way. It is as if their spirit is tainted by the knowledge they carry.

Ancients Tech

Most Droyne suffer from a superstitious terror of Ancients devices and sites, and will not go anywhere near them if they have the choice. Those designated to use, tend or simply preserve knowledge of Ancients devices may not be any less afraid but are able to conquer fear through knowledge. The Ancients Tech skill is used when figuring out the function of a device or installation and more commonly to use a device that has been preserved since the time of the Ancients.

Appeal

The Appeal skill deals with what might be termed internal diplomacy in Droyne society. External interactions are governed by Diplomat as usual but Appeal is used when a Droyne wants a superior or the Droyne in charge of a different group – this might be a force of Warriors or an entire planetary Oytrip – to hear what they have to say. Appeal is also used by Sports acting as emissaries when conducting diplomacy with other Oytrips. Success ensures the Droyne has observed the correct formalities – if not they will not be heard at all – in addition to presenting the case well. A Drone with a good idea has no chance of persuading her Leader to implement it without using the Appeal skill successfully but might approach a Sport to act as a go-between. She would still need to make an Appeal check to get the Sport to listen but the difficulty would be much lower.

Art (Droyne)

Droyne art is not purely decorative. It conveys information and may even play a part in the correct function of an installation or device. A starship that is decorated properly will 'feel' better to its crew and might actually perform better. A basic level of skill in Art (Droyne) allows the creation of proper decoration for routine purposes. At skill level 2 the Droyne can create informative and 'improving' art, such as that which is felt to make a starship jump better. At skill level 4 the Droyne can create psionic trigger-art, which conveys detailed information by triggering the observer's brain to essentially imagine what the artist wanted them to.

Caste (caste)

There are six caste-related skills – Warrior, Drone and so forth – which can only be received by members of that caste. This skill indicates how well the Droyne can perform the routine duties of their caste, including rituals and operation of devices. It is tied almost directly to rank within the caste. Droyne do not have a formal rank structure in the usual sense but each time a Droyne gains a level in their caste Profession skill they are likely to take on more responsibility. The Leader-of-Leaders with the highest Caste (leader) skill in an Oytrip is in overall charge, even if there is – for example – a Leader-of-Warriors with a higher Caste (leader) skill.

NAME:

RADS: AGE:

SPECIES:

SPECIES TRAITS:

HOMEWORLD:

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH DM

DEXTERITY DM

ENDURANCE DM

INTELLECT DM

EDUCATION DM

SOCIAL DM

PSI: DM

ARMOUR

TYPE	RAD	PROTECTION	KG	OPTIONS

FINANCES

PENSION

Cr ____________

DEBT

Cr ____________

CASH ON HAND

Cr ____________

MONTHLY SHIP PAYMENTS

Cr ____________

LIVING COST

Cr ____________

ALLIES, CONTACTS, ENEMIES, RIVALS

STUDY PERIOD

TRAINING IN SKILL: ____________

WEEKS: ____________ ____________

STUDY PERIODS COMPLETE: ____________

SKILLS

Admin
Advocate
Ancients Tech
Animals
Animals
Appeal
Appeal
Athletics
Athletics
Art (Droyne)
Art
Astrogation
Black Skills
Broker
Carouse
Caste (caste)
Caste (caste)

Deception
Diplomat
Drive
Electronics
Electronics
Engineer
Engineer
Explosives
Flight
Flight
Flyer
Gambler
Gunner
Gunner
Gun Combat
Gun Combat
Gun Combat

Heavy Weapons
Heavy Weapons
Investigate
Jack of all Trades
Language
Language
Language
Leadership
Mechanic
Medic
Melee
Melee
Navigation
Outsider
Persuade
Pilot
Pilot

Prediction
Profession
Profession
Recon
Science
Science
Science
Seafarer
Seafarer
Stealth
Steward
Streetwise
Survival
Tactics
Tactics
Tolerance
Vacc Suit

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	KG	MAGAZINE	TRAITS

AUGMENTS

TYPE	TL	IMPROVEMENT

EQUIPMENT

	MASS		MASS		MASS

TOTAL CARRIED MASS

Flight

The Flight skill is dealt with in the section on Droyne flight, on page 188. A Droyne who receives Flight but whose wings are too small to fly may instead select one of Drive, Flyer, Recon or Survival.

Outsider (race or culture)

The Outsider skill is used when conducting dealings with non-Droyne. A high skill level does not suggest the Droyne has any particular liking for the species in question but they will understand the subject culture. This permits diplomacy to be undertaken without utterly confusing the outsiders but has wider implications. A Droyne with the Outsider (Vargr) skill, for example, is aware that Vargr conduct trade and warfare very differently to Droyne. They may be able to predict what goods will sell well in Vargr markets or how a military campaign will unfold. A skill check can be used to make reasonable and general predictions about members of the subject race or culture.

In addition, where responses of the subject are important – such as using the Broker skill to negotiate a good deal – the Droyne cannot receive a DM greater than their Outsider skill with the relevant culture. The converse is also true; an outsider trying to use advanced negotiating skills will find they are lost on a Leader who does not comprehend much of what is being said. A Leader who is supported by those with this skill can use the highest level available as an enabler for their own skills. If, for some reason, the Droyne decide to explain what they are doing or why, the Outsider skill is used to frame this in terms the outsiders can comprehend. Since few Droyne have this skill, much of what they say and do remains utterly incomprehensible to outsiders.

Prediction

The Prediction skill represents the talent for predicting future events using the coyns. Whether or not the future is preordained is an open question but a successful prediction can assist a group of Droyne in their endeavours. A prediction is no small matter; it must be undertaken at the centre of a solemn ceremony and cannot be made until the previous one has run its course.

A Droyne that wishes to make a meaningful prediction must pass an Average (8+) Prediction check. If it is failed the prediction is meaningless and the effort cannot be repeated for 1D days for every point of negative Effect. If the check is successful, the Droyne selects six coyns at random (see page 206). Neutral coyns indicate possible events but do not influence the outcome of the prediction. Positive coyns are worth DM+2 to be applied to any one check each during the period of the prediction but negative coyns nullify one positive coyn each. Positive and negative coyns may also indicate events or participants.

Outsiders

Kyussesk is a Sport, who has Outsider (Imperial) 2. A party of K'Kree arrive at his Oytrip's capital wanting to trade. No-one is available with the specific Outsider skill relating to K'Kree, so Kyussesk is assigned to advise his Leader-of-Leaders. The K'Kree start blundering around cluelessly, as if they have no idea how to conduct a diplomatic visit! The Leader-of-Leaders is perplexed and worried that this might escalate into a major incident but Kyussesk – who is considered to have Outsider 0 for all cultures – is on hand to advise.

Kyussesk understands that outsiders generally do not know the proper rituals and are perhaps not aware that they should send a Sport (or equivalent) to the Place of Supplication for Agreements – they probably do not know it exists! He explains this to his Leader-of-Leaders and is assigned to guide the new arrivals through the correct process. This is difficult, even with a good translation device, since Kyussesk does not understand the idiom and figures of speech used by his guests. Indeed, all he knows is that they do not think like Droyne and that he must make allowances for their failure to understand the correct way of behaving.

By the time Kyussesk has guided the K'Kree party through the Ritual of Approach – thus enabling the Leader-of-Leaders to interact with them – another Sport has been found who has Outsider (K'Kree) 2. The Leader-of-Leaders delegates negotiations to a representative who has Broker 3 but this is limited to skill level 2 by the highest Outsider (K'Kree) skill present.

In addition to any DM gained from positive coyns, the Leader for whom the Prediction was made also gains a 'floating DM' equal to positive Effect of the check. Each positive coyn DM must be applied to a separate check but this floating DM can be used however the Leader wishes. This cannot make the impossible doable but so long as an action is physically possible this DM can be used to make it happen.

A prediction is in force for 1D days plus 1D days for every positive coyn DM gained. Thus if a Prediction succeeded with Effect +3 and the net result was two positive coyn DMs, the prediction is in force for 3D days. The Leader can apply DM+2 on any two checks within that time and an additional DM+3, all at once or in parts, to any checks including one already benefiting from a positive coyn DM.

Black Skills

Black Skills include Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade and Streetwise. All are connected with deceit or activity alien to the Oytrip-oriented lifestyle of the Droyne, such that learning these skills or engaging in these activities somehow diminishes the Droyne doing so. A Droyne with any levels in Black Skills suffers a negative DM equal to their highest Black Skill level on checks for advancement in their career and continuation.

CREATING A DROYNE TRAVELLER

Creating a Droyne Traveller is generally similar to other races but there are some significant differences. Droyne mature very suddenly as a result of casting and undergo significant changes. There is no formal rank and no equivalent to SOC; a Droyne's position is rather more loosely defined. Within each caste there are rough levels of 'value' – how highly valued a given Droyne is by their Oytrip – but this is not a hard-and fast structure, and in any case a member of the Leader caste can command members of any other caste no matter what their relative value may be. This value is largely determined by the Droyne's Caste skill.

Characteristics

At the beginning of Traveller creation, an immature Droyne's six characteristics are determined. The first five (STR, DEX, END, INT, EDU) are rolled on 1D+1 rather than the usual 2D. These will be later modified when caste is determined. The sixth (PSI) is rolled on 2D as it does not depend upon caste. Droyne do not have SOC at all.

Droyne Traits

All casted Droyne gain the following Traits.

Close Combat Aversion: Droyne dislike close combat, possibly due to their light bone structure which makes blows more damaging. Melee is not quite a Black Skill but few Droyne learn to fight without weapons or other mechanical aids. A Droyne struck with a weapon that relies on impact, such as a baseball bat or club, suffers an additional point of damage per 1D rolled. In addition, all Droyne suffer DM-2 when fighting unarmed as their natural reaction is to flinch away rather than taking decisive action.

Droyne Claws: All Droyne have a sharp claw on their hands and feet, which can be used in combat if necessary. This is a last resort; Droyne dislike close combat and will avoid it if at all possible. Claws do 1D+2 damage if employed as a weapon and use the Melee (natural) skill. They are more commonly used as a tool or an aid in gripping some surfaces. A Droyne that can dig their claws in gains DM+1 when trying to remain anchored or to keep hold of something.

Wings: All Droyne have wings, although some are vestigial. Newly casted Droyne must determine wing size by rolling 1D. Wings are vestigial on a 1D roll of 1–3, small on 4–5 and large on 6. Droyne who have small or large wings automatically gain Flight 0.

Careers

A Droyne's career begins at age 12 with the casting ceremony. It is not possible to create an uncasted Droyne as a Traveller, since they possess little more than animal intelligence. Chirpers and uncasted Droyne would normally be treated as animals, although enclaves may exist which are smarter and have their own career paths. Caste may be chosen for Travellers, or randomly determined by rolling 1D.

1: Worker
2: Warrior
3: Drone
4: Technician
5: Sport
6: Leader

The score rolled is also the 'caste number' and may be relevant later in Traveller creation.

Once caste is determined, the young Droyne will develop quickly into the adult form of their caste. All casted Droyne immediately gain +1 to STR, DEX, END, INT and EDU. Effectively, this is the same as rolling 1D+2 for those characteristics but the timing of this increase may be significant in some cases.

The following modifiers are then applied to the characteristics of the Droyne at the beginning of their first term.

Worker: STR +2, END +4
Warrior: STR +3, DEX +1, END +2
Drone: DEX +1, INT +3, EDU +2
Technician: DEX +2, INT +3, EDU +1
Sport: DEX +1, END +1, INT +2, EDU +2
Leader: INT +4, EDU +2

The Iron Droyne Rule

Earlier editions of *Traveller* had a rule whereby a Droyne must roll their caste number or more on 2D each term. Failure meant ejection from the Oytrip and ritual suicide. Hardcore traditionalists may wish to use this 'Iron Droyne Rule' during Traveller creation.

Ranks, Mishaps and Mustering Out

Droyne do not have ranks in the usual sense. The rank number is simply a guide for the Referee and Travellers, and titles are an indicator of how a Droyne regarded by the Oytrip. Low-value Droyne will be given the most risky tasks and may even be sent into suicidal situations if there is some benefit to the Oytrip.

Mishaps are treated differently for Droyne than other races. No Mishap automatically forces the Droyne to leave their career. However, any time a Mishap occurs the Droyne must make a continuation check.

There is no mustering out process as such. Droyne serve their Oytrip until they die or are no longer useful – in which case they usually die anyway. Droyne Travellers resolve their mustering out process, which indicates their circumstances at the time they begin adventuring but this can be omitted for most Droyne, who will either still be serving their Oytrip or beginning their ritual suicide.

Continuation Checks

A continuation check is a 2D roll with Caste skill level used as a positive DM and caste number as a negative DM. The check is of Simple (2+) difficulty. If it is passed, there is no additional effect. If failed, the Droyne is ejected from the Oytrip. Most commit suicide at this point but a Traveller may assume this is where their adventuring begins.

CAREERS

Droyne Travellers do not have careers in the usual sense. They are members of the same caste from the time of their Iskyar ritual until they die. Career progression is determined by success in their caste's field of expertise alone – a Droyne can never change caste. Any Droyne with Black Skills receives a negative DM equal to their highest Black Skill level on all checks for advancement and continuation.

BASIC TRAINING

All Droyne undergo psionic testing (see page 196 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*) upon casting, before their first term. In addition, all Droyne receive all the skills from their caste-specific skills table at level 0 plus one from that table (rolled randomly) at level 1.

Droyne Life Events

2D	Event
2	You help build a prestigious starship. Choose to gain either one level in Engineer, Electronics or Mechanic, or increase rank by +1.
3	Your immediate Leader dies or is discredited. Make a Caste check. If you succeed, your rank is increased by +1 when you join a new Leader. If you fail, it is decreased by –1.
4	You gain a Black Skill. Gain one level of Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade or Streetwise
5	Your daily efforts are in keeping with the expectations of your Leaders. Gain a level in your Caste skill.
6	The Oytrip struggles through difficult times. Make a Caste skill check. If successful you suffer no ill effects. If you fail, your rank is reduced by –1.
7	The Oytrip endures.
8	The Oytrip prospers. Your diligent work brings you into contact with an important Leader. Make an Appeal check. If successful you gain this Leader as a Contact.
9	You come into contact with outsiders. Make an Outsider check. If successful, you gain an Ally from outside the Oytrip. If you fail, you gain a level of Outsider in a specialty of your choice.
10	You are taken on a voyage, or lead one. Gain one level in Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer or Electronics.
11	You are selected for advanced psionic training. Gain PSI +1.
12	You come into contact with Ancients technology. It is frightening but fascinating. You gain one level of Ancients Tech.

DROYNE LIFE EVENTS

Droyne do not use the standard Life Events system. Instead, a Droyne Traveller rolls 2D, with their caste number as a positive DM, at the end of every term. On a result of 10+, roll on the Droyne Life Events table. Unusual events are the only way most Droyne can develop Contacts, Rivals, Allies or Enemies outside the Oytrip.

AGING

Droyne become adults soon after casting, which occurs at age 12, and begin aging at age 24. Aging is handled the same as for humans; roll 2D at the end of the fourth term and every term thereafter, with a negative DM equal to the number of terms served.

1 WORKER

Workers provide manual and semi-skilled labour throughout Droyne society.

Qualification: Automatic for Workers. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Farming: You work in food production and preparation. You may be an agricultural worker, food preparation technician or part of a team that ensures meals are delivered and served in the correct manner.
Labouring: You are a simple worker, either in a physical or administrative field. You spend a lot of your time carrying out repetitive tasks. Sometimes a Leader has an important job for you and you strive to perform it correctly.
Building: You build the structures and machinery, perhaps even the starships, used by your society. You may be a labourer or a skilled worker. You do not understand how the machinery works but if you complete your task correctly it will function to your Leaders' satisfaction. That is all that matters.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Farming	END 4+	STR 10+
Labouring	STR 5+	END 10+
Building	DEX 5+	INT 8+

*Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr250	STR+2
2	Cr500	END+1
3	Cr750	INT+1
4	Cr1000	Tool Kit
5	Cr2500	Vacc Suit
6	Cr5000	Wings
7	Cr10000	Weapon

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	USEFUL WORKER (MIN INT 6+)
1	STR +1	Mechanic	Ancients Tech
2	DEX +1	Drive	Appeal
3	END +1	Profession	Electronics
4	INT +1	Appeal	Outsider
5	Mechanic	Flight	Vacc Suit
6	Jack-of-all-Trades	Caste	Any psionic skill
1D	**FARMING WORKER**	**LABOURING WORKER**	**BUILDING WORKER**
1	Animals	STR+1	Art (Droyne)
2	Athletics	Admin	Driver
3	Drive	Drive	Electronics
4	Flyer	Flyer	Explosives
5	Profession	END +1	Mechanic
6	Steward	Outsider	Jack-of-all-Trades

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Worker	—
2	Satisfactory Worker	Caste (worker)
3	Valued Worker	Profession
4	Highly Valued Worker	Appeal
5	Exemplary Worker	INT+1
6	Eminent Worker	Leadership

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. In desperation the Leaders order your fellow Workers to shield the remaining Warriors with your bodies. Many die but the Oytrip is saved. Gain your choice of Gun Combat, Melee or Medic but suffer –D3 to STR, DEX or END due to your wounds. Make a continuation check.
2	A junior Leader challenges the seniors in your Oytrip. The situation is confusing and you try to ignore it but eventually you are forced to choose between them. If you side with the junior Leader you are driven from the Oytrip and join their Kroyloss, which breaks up soon afterward. Muster out and begin your adventuring now. If you did not side with them, nothing happens to you. These things are above mere Workers. You must still make a continuation check.
3	A dangerous situation arises and the workers are ordered to make great sacrifices to save the Oytrip. If you behave correctly, you suffer injuries and lose –1 in each of STR, DEX and END, and must make a continuation check. If you do not behave correctly, you betray your role in the Oytrip and are rightly driven from it. You may continue to betray your Oytrip by mustering out and beginning your adventuring now or may commit ritual suicide as is correct in these situations.
4	Bad things occur. The Leaders do not confide in you because you are a lowly Worker. You thus have no idea what happened but the Oytrip endures. Make a continuation check but suffer no other ill-effects.
5	Your Leader undertakes an expedition that goes badly wrong. You are forced to survive outside Droyne society for several months. You gain an immediate level in Outsider (any) and may choose to take one level of Streetwise. However, this is a Black Skill and will diminish you as a Droyne. Make a continuation check with the negative DM for any Black Skills you may have.
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –1. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You accompany an eminent Leader and gain their respect for your diligence. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	Your fellow Workers ask you to raise concerns with your Leader. Make an Appeal check. If successful, you are heard and the situation is positively resolved. Your rank increases by +1. Whether you succeed or fail, gain one level of Appeal.
5	Your Leader asks much of you. If you follow their directions, gain one level in any of: Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade or Streetwise. These are Black Skills and you are diminished by knowing them. If you refuse to obey, you are ejected from the Oytrip. It is not the place of Workers to challenge their Leaders.
6	You do good work and your Leader is pleased. Gain one level in Profession, Drive, Flyer or Appeal.
7	You work every day. The Oytrip prospers.
8	Your Leader takes you on an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	You have an idea. If you dare suggest it to the Leader, make an immediate Appeal check. If successful, your rank is increased by +1. If you fail, your rank is reduced by –1 and you are given onerous tasks to perform. If you keep quiet, this is good because Workers should not be bothering their Leaders with trivialities. Gain one level of skill in an appropriate Profession or in Caste.
10	You are involved with outsiders and find them less confusing than most others of your Caste. Gain one level in Outsider skill and a Contact outside the Oytrip.
11	You are involved in the creation of a starship and you learn a little about how it works. Gain one level in any Electronics, Engineer, Gunner or Vacc Suit.
12	Your Leader is honoured with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. You tend and sometimes carry it for him. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

2 WARRIOR

Warriors defend the Oytrip and its members and destroy threats when necessary.

Qualification: Automatic for Warriors. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Warrior: You attack and destroy the enemies of your Oytrip. You may be a bodyguard or a ground combat specialist, but either way fighting is all you know.
Guard Warrior: You protect the Oytrip and its members, either in combat or in a rescue and emergency medical role.
Voyaging: You travel to fight for your Oytrip. You may be a combat recon specialist or a starship crewmember or some similar role that protects your Oytrip and its people.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Battling	END 6+	END 9+
Guard	END 5+	INT 10+
Voyaging	INT 6+	DEX 9+

* Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr250	END +2
2	Cr500	STR +1
3	Cr750	Weapon
4	Cr1000	Weapon
5	Cr2500	Vacc Suit
6	Cr5000	Wings
7	Cr10000	Weapon

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	SKILLED WARRIOR (MIN INT 6+)
1	STR +1	Gun Combat	Ancients Tech
2	DEX +1	Recon	Appeal
3	END +1	Melee	Leadership
4	Gun Combat	Athletics	Stealth
5	Medic	Flight	Vacc Suit
6	Heavy Weapons	Caste	Any psionic skill
1D	**BATTLING WARRIOR**	**GUARDING WARRIOR**	**VOYAGING WARRIOR**
1	Gun Combat	Drive	Electronics
2	Athletics	Medic	Gunner
3	Melee	Gun Combat	Pilot
4	Heavy Weapons	Athletics	Gun Combat
5	Explosives	Flyer	Recon
6	Stealth	Recon	Vacc Suit

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Warrior	—
2	Satisfactory Warrior	Caste (warrior)
3	Valued Warrior	Gun Combat
4	Highly Valued Warrior	Tactics
5	Exemplary Warrior	INT +1
6	Eminent Warrior	Leadership

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. You defend it and are wounded to an acceptable level. Gain your choice of Gun Combat, Melee or Medic but lose –D3 on STR, DEX or END due to your wounds. Make a continuation check.
2	A junior Leader challenges the seniors in your Oytrip. You are placed on alert but there is no violence. The junior Leader is driven from the Oytrip. If they were your Leader and you go with them you are exiled from the Oytrip and joined their Kroyloss, which breaks up soon afterward. Muster out and begin adventuring now. If they were not your Leader, everything goes on as before but you must still make a continuation check.
3	A dangerous situation arises and the Warriors took heavy losses. If you behave correctly, you lose -1 in each of STR, DEX and END and must make a Continuation check. If you do not behave correctly, you betrayed your role in the Oytrip and are rightly driven from it. You may continue to betray your Oytrip by mustering out and beginning your adventuring now or may commit ritual suicide as is correct in these situations.
4	Bad things occur. The Leaders formulate a plan and corrected the situation. You do not know the details and you are not meant to for you are a Warrior, not a Leader. Make a continuation check but suffer no other ill-effects.
5	Your Leader undertakes an expedition that goes badly wrong. You are forced to survive outside Droyne society for several months. You gain an immediate level in Outsider (any) and may choose to take one level of Streetwise. However, this is a Black Skill and will diminish you as a Droyne. Make a continuation check with the negative DM for any Black Skills you may have.
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –1. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You accompany an eminent Leader and gain their respect for your diligence. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	Your Leader honours you by recommending training in Ancients technology. Gain one level in Ancients Tech.
5	Your Leader orders you to defend a position to the last drop of blood. Make a Gun Combat check. If successful, it was the enemy's blood and you gain one level of Gun Combat, Melee or Heavy Weapons. If you fail, it was your blood and you gain one level of Medic.
6	You do good work and your Leader is pleased. Gain one level in Gun Combat, Heavy Weapons, Vacc Suit or Leadership.
7	You guard the Oytrip. The Oytrip prospers.
8	Your Leader takes you on an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	You showed initiative and other Warriors followed you. Make a Tactics check. If successful, you were correct and your diligence is rewarded rank +1. If you failed, rank is reduced by –1 but you learned from your mistakes; gain one level of Tactics (any).
10	You were involved with outsiders. Some of them fought quite well, considering. Gain one level in Outsider (any) and a Contact outside the Oytrip.
11	You are honoured to serve aboard a starship. Gain one level in any of Electronics, Engineer, Gunner, Vacc Suit or Pilot.
12	Your Leader is honoured with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. You guard it diligently. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

3 TECHNICIAN

Technicians make, maintain and repair devices used throughout Droyne society.

Qualification: Automatic for Technicians. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Fixing: You maintain and repair technical equipment, starships and vehicles.
Artificer: You make devices, chemicals and software on behalf of the Oytrip.
Dreaming: You do scientific research, although often you do not know the significance of what you are discovering.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Fixing	INT 4+	DEX 9+
Artificer	EDU 5+	INT 9+
Dreaming	INT 6+	EDU 8+

* Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr500	INT+2
2	Cr750	DEX +1
3	Cr1000	Tool Kit
4	Cr1500	PSI +1
5	Cr3000	Vacc Suit
6	Cr5000	Wings
7	Cr10000	Weapon

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	USEFUL TECHNICIAN (MIN INT 6+)
1	INT +1	Mechanic	Ancients Tech
2	DEX +1	Drive	Appeal
3	EDU +1	Electronics	Science
4	Flight	Vacc Suit	Outsider
5	Appeal	Flyer	Art (Droyne)
6	Jack-of-all-Trades	Caste	Any psionic skill
1D	**FIXING TECHNICIAN**	**ARTIFICER**	**DREAMING TECHNICIAN**
1	Mechanic	Electronics	Art (Droyne)
2	Electronics	Engineer	Science
3	Electronics (remote ops)	Electronics (remote ops)	Science
4	Flyer	Appeal	Investigate
5	Profession	DEX+1	PSI +1
6	Caste	Caste	Caste

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Technician	—
2	Satisfactory Technician	Caste (technician)
3	Valued Technician	Appeal
4	Highly Valued Technician	Electronics
5	Exemplary Technician	INT +1
6	Eminent Technician	Leadership

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. Roll 1D: on 1-4 the Warriors deal with the problem and you continue your work uninterrupted. On 5–6 you are caught in the fighting. Gain your choice of Gun Combat, Melee or Medic but lose –D3 from STR, DEX or END due to your wounds. Make a continuation check.
2	A junior Leader challenges the seniors in your Oytrip. This causes serious disruption to your work and you are punished for the failure of a project. The junior Leader offers you a place in their Kroyloss if you left with them. If you did, you are exiled from the Oytrip; the Kroyloss breaks up and you are alone. Muster out and begin adventuring or commit ritual suicide as is correct. If you do not leave the Oytrip, your rank is reduced by -1. You must still make a continuation check.
3	A dangerous situation arises and the Technicians are instructed to work under hazardous conditions. If you behave correctly, you lose 1 point in each of STR, DEX and END and must make a continuation check. If you do not behave correctly, you betray your role in the Oytrip and are rightly driven from it. You may continue to betray your Oytrip by mustering out and begin adventuring now or may commit ritual suicide as is correct in these situations.
4	Bad things occur. You are asked to make emergency repairs under dangerous conditions. If you try your hardest regardless of your own safety, you lose –D3 points from STR, DEX or END and your rank increases by +1. If you do the minimum expected of you and let the burden fall on your fellow Technicians you suffer no injuries but rank is reduced by –1. You must also make a continuation check.
5	Your Leader leads you on an expedition which goes badly wrong. You are forced to survive outside Droyne society for several months. You gain an immediate level in Outsider (any) and may choose to take one level of Streetwise. However, this is a Black Skill and will diminish you as a Droyne. Make a continuation check with the negative DM for any Black Skills you may have.
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –1. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You accompany an eminent Leader and gain their respect for your diligence. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	You come up with a new and better way of accomplishing a task. Make an Appeal check. If successful, your rank is increased by +1. If unsuccessful you are chided by your leader for raising such trivial concerns but gain a level in Caste (technician) as a result of better knowing your place.
5	Your Leader asks much of you. If you follow their directions, gain one level in any of: Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade or Streetwise. These are Black Skills and you are diminished by knowing them. If you refuse to obey, you are ejected from the Oytrip. It is not the place of Technicians to challenge their Leaders.
6	You serve the Oytrip well and your Leader is pleased. Gain one level in Profession, Drive, Flyer or Appeal.
7	You carry out your duties. The Oytrip suffers few breakdowns and equipment problems.
8	Your Leader takes you on an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	You proved unusually adept at your primary role. If you are a Fixing Technician, gain DEX +1. If you are an Artificer, gain EDU +1. If you are a Dreaming Technician, gain INT +1.
10	You are involved with outsiders and find them less confusing than most others of your Caste. Gain one level in Outsider (any) and a Contact outside the Oytrip.
11	You are involved in the creation or crewing of a starship. Gain one level in any of Electronics, Engineer, Gunner, Pilot or Vacc Suit.
12	Your Leader is honoured with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. You are charged with looking after it. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

4 DRONE

Drones are vital to Droyne reproduction and raising young. They are also important to ritual, social and managerial functions.

Qualification: Automatic for Drones. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Family: Your role is to care for and educate the young.
Priestly: You perform the many rituals required to maintain the Oytrip and to caste the young.
Social: You are an administrator or middle-manager.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Family	INT 4+	PSI 9+
Priestly	PSI 4+	EDU 8+
Social	EDU 5+	INT 9+

* Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr500	INT +1
2	Cr1000	EDU +1
3	Cr1500	PSI +1
4	Cr2500	Coyns
5	Cr5000	Vacc Suit
6	Cr7500	Wings
7	Cr10000	Coyns

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	USEFUL DRONE (MIN INT 6+)
1	INT+1	Admin	Any psionic skill
2	EDU +1	Appeal	Appeal
3	PSI +1	Profession	Science
4	Appeal	Art (Droyne)	Outsider
5	Flight	Medic	PSI +1
6	Prediction	Caste	Caste
1D	**FAMILY DRONE**	**PRIESTLY DRONE**	**SOCIAL DRONE**
1	Steward	PSI +1	Art (Droyne)
2	Art (Droyne)	Prediction	Prediction
3	Appeal	Art (Droyne)	Admin
4	Medic	Ancients Tech	Appeal
5	Profession	Appeal	Leadership
6	Steward	Prediction	Outsider

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Drone	—
2	Satisfactory Drone	Caste (drone)
3	Valued Drone	PSI +1
4	Highly Valued Drone	Appeal
5	Exemplary Drone	Prediction
6	Eminent Drone	Leadership

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. Roll 1D. On 1–4 the Warriors protect you and no adverse effects are suffered. On 5–6 the family areas are penetrated and the young endangered. Gain one level of Medic but you suffer a –D3 reduction on STR, DEX or END due to your wounds. Make a continuation check.
2	A junior Leader challenges the seniors in your Oytrip. You are called upon to consult the coyns. Make a Prediction check. If you succeed, you may choose the outcome you desire. If you fail, decide whether to support the challenge or oppose it. Then roll 1D. On 1–3 the junior Leader was incorrect and is driven from the Oytrip. If you supported them, you are sent with them. You join their Kroyloss, which breaks up soon afterward. Muster out and begin adventuring or commit ritual suicide. If you did not support them, you suffer no ill effects but must make a continuation check. On 4–6 the junior Leader was correct and the senior leaders step aside in their favour. If you supported them no ill effects befall you. If not, you participate in the death rituals for the previous leadership and are expected to join them. You may commit ritual suicide or leave the Oytrip.
3	A dangerous situation arises and the whole Oytrip suffers. You are tasked with getting the young to safety. If you take extraordinary risks, you suffer a 1 point reduction in each of STR, DEX and END and must make a continuation check. If you allow others to make the sacrifice you suffer no harm but your rank drops by –1 and you gain an Enemy within the Oytrip.
4	Bad things occur. It is best not to speak of them, for fear of frightening the young and the Workers. You are involved in coordinating the response at the mid-level. Make a Leadership or Admin check. If successful, you organise a useful response and all is well. If you fail, you witness terrible events which shake your confidence in the Leaders. You may leave the Oytrip now or make a continuation check in each subsequent term at DM-4.
5	Your Leader undertakes an expedition which goes badly wrong. Make a Prediction check. If successful, you advised against it and receive due honour when the situation is resolved. If you fail, you advised that the expedition go ahead. Your rank is reduced by –1 but you gain one level of Outsider (any).
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –1. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You accompany an eminent Leader and gain their respect for your diligence. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	You attempt to bring various matters to the attention of the Leaders. Make an Appeal check. If you succeed, you gain rank +1 or one level of Caste. If you fail, you are discredited for a time but gain a level of Appeal.
5	Your Leader engages in a voyage and brings you along as a performer of rituals. You learn much about starfaring and the wider universe. Gain one level in any of Outsider, Science (any), Vacc Suit.
6	You do good work and your Leader is pleased. Gain one level in Profession, Admin, Art (Droyne) or Appeal.
7	The Oytrip prospers due to the diligence of its members. Your Leaders are pleased.
8	Your Leader takes you on an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	You made a prediction. It was alarming. If you reveal it to the Leader, make an immediate Appeal check. If successful, your rank is increased by +1. If you fail, your rank is reduced by –1 and you are given onerous tasks to perform.
10	You are involved with outsiders. It was overall quite disturbing but you think you benefited from the experience. Gain one level in Outsider (any) and a Contact outside the Oytrip.
11	You are involved in the creation of an installation owned by your Oytrip but far outside it. Your managerial skills are tested. Gain one level of Admin, Appeal or Leadership.
12	Your Leader is honoured with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. You perform the appropriate rituals to keep it safe and functional. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

5 SPORT

Sports are scouts and emissaries, and also carry out most trading functions on behalf of an Oytrip. They are the only caste likely to be encountered operating independently.

Qualification: Automatic for Sports. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Finding: You locate and obtain what the Oytrip needs. This may be by prospecting, surveying an area or speculating on the stock exchange at a nearby starport.
Speaker: You are an emissary, carrying messages within an Oytrip or to others. You may be sent to interact with non-Droyne.
Seeking: You travel far from the Oytrip as an explorer, spy or scout.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Finding	INT 5+	EDU 9+
Speaker	EDU 5+	INT 9+
Seeking	INT 6+	EDU 8+

* Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr1000	INT +1
2	Cr2000	DEX +1
3	Cr3000	EDU +1
4	Cr5000	Weapon
5	Cr7500	Vacc Suit
6	Cr10000	Wings
7	Cr15000	Coyns

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	USEFUL SPORT (MIN INT 6+)
1	DEX +1	Gun Combat	Any psionic skill
2	END +1	Melee	Pilot
3	INT +1	Drive	Astrogation
4	EDU +1	Flight	Engineer
5	PSI +1	Appeal	Vacc Suit
6	Jack-of-all-Trades	Caste	Caste
1D	**FINDING SPORT**	**SPEAKER SPORT**	**SEEKING SPORT**
1	Broker	Appeal	Pilot
2	Diplomat	Outsider	Astrogation
3	Investigate	Diplomat	Recon
4	Science	Advocate	Stealth
5	Electronics	Caste	Outsider
6	Outsider	Art (Droyne)	Navigation

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Sport	—
2	Satisfactory Sport	Caste (sport)
3	Valued Sport	Appeal
4	Highly Valued Sport	Outsider
5	Exemplary Sport	INT +1
6	Eminent Sport	Leader

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. You are one of the emissaries sent to negotiate an end to the conflict. Make an Appeal check. If successful, the fighting is ended quickly although you lose –1 to STR, DEX or END due to a stray shot or blow. If you fail, the damage is increased to –1 on each of these characteristics. Make a continuation check.
2	A junior Leader challenges the seniors in your Oytrip. They are ejected from the Oytrip for their temerity and chooses to form a Kroyloss with their immediate followers. You are sent to monitor this group and follow it very far from home before it meets a sad end. Realising you may never get back to the Oytrip, you have the option of beginning your adventuring now – or committing ritual suicide. If you choose to try to get home, make an END check. If successful, you made it and are welcomed back. If you fail, you eventually arrived half-starved and in a near-deranged state from loneliness. Reduce INT, EDU and PSI by –1 each. You must also make a continuation check.
3	A dangerous situation arises and you have a chance to stop it getting worse. Make an Appeal check. If successful, you bring to the attention of the Oytrip's highest Leader a series of incorrect actions by another Leader, which results in them being ejected from the Oytrip. You gain this Leader and their Kroyloss as an Enemy. If you fail, you do not deliver the news in time and the situation goes out of control. Reduce rank by –1 and make a continuation check.
4	Bad things occur. You are instructed to go to another Oytrip and ask for assistance but not to reveal what has happened. Make an Appeal check. If successful, your request is granted and the situation is salvaged. If you fail, desperate measures have to be taken. The Leaders arrange a Ritual of Cleansing whereby those involved commit suicide to carry away the stigma of the deeds done. You have been selected to take part. You may do so if you wish. If not, you must betray your Oytrip and flee, living in disgrace among outsiders. Muster out and begin adventuring now.
5	Your Leader undertakes an expedition which goes badly wrong. Those involved are forced to survive outside Droyne society for several months. You are sent to find them and get them home. Make an Outsider check. If successful, you suffer no ill effects. If you fail, reduce rank by –1. Either way, you gain a Contact outside the Oytrip.
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –1. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You accompany an eminent Leader and gain their respect for your diligence. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	The Workers of your Oytrip ask you to raise concerns with the senior Leaders. Make an Appeal check. If successful, you are heard and the situation is positively resolved. Your rank increases by +1. Whether you succeed or fail, gain one level of Appeal.
5	You are sent to live among non-Droyne and learn about them. Gain one level of Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade or Streetwise. These are Black Skills and you are diminished by knowing them.
6	You have to work outside your normal area of expertise. Gain one level in any skill from any table available to your caste.
7	The Oytrip prospers. All is well.
8	Your Leader takes you on an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	You interact with non-Droyne. Gain one level in Outsider or any Black Skill.
10	You travel aboard starships for much of this term. Gain one level in any of Astrogation, Electronics, Engineer, Gunner, Pilot, Vacc Suit.
11	It is necessary to approach and investigate a piece of Ancients technology. You are sent to undertake a preliminary investigation. Make an Ancients Tech or Art (Droyne) check. If successful, you gain PSI +1 and a level in Ancients Tech. If you fail, you may choose one or the other.
12	Your Leader is honoured with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. You tend and sometimes carry it for him. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

6 LEADER

Leaders are the top echelon of Droyne society. They make all policy decisions and determine the fate of their subordinates.

Qualification: Automatic for Leaders. Prohibited for all others.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Military: You command Warriors, either as ground forces or aboard a spacecraft.
Priestly: You preside over important rituals an safeguard the society of the Oytrip. You may also act as a senior merchant or trader.
Leader of Leaders: You lead and direct other Leaders, perhaps even the whole Oytrip.

CAREER PROGRESS

	SURVIVAL	ADVANCEMENT*
Military	END 6+	INT 8+
Priestly	EDU 5+	INT 9+
Leader	INT 6+	EDU 10+

* Advancement is subject to a negative DM equal to the highest skill level the Droyne has in a Black Skill.

END OF SERVICE

1D	CASH	BENEFIT
1	Cr1000	INT +1
2	Cr2000	PSI +1
3	Cr5000	Weapon
4	Cr7500	Weapon
5	Cr10000	Vacc Suit
6	Cr15000	Wings
7	Cr25000	Ship

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	TRUSTED LEADER (MIN PSI 8+)
1	INT +1	Admin	Ancients Tech
2	EDU +1	Leadership	Any psionic skill
3	PSI +1	Outsider	Diplomat
4	Leadership	Appeal	Astrogation
5	Flight	Gun Combat	Vacc Suit
6	Ancients Tech	Caste	Any psionic skill
1D	**MILITARY LEADER**	**PRIESTLY LEADER**	**LEADER OF LEADERS**
1	Gun Combat	PSI +1	Leadership
2	Tactics	Art (Droyne)	Diplomat
3	Leadership	Prediction	Gun Combat
4	Vacc Suit	Broker	Leadership
5	Astrogation	Leader	Admin
6	Any psionic skill	Any psionic skill	Any psionic skill

RANKS AND BONUSES

RANK	TITLE	SKILL OR BONUS
0	Excess to Requirements	—
1	Expendable Leader	—
2	Satisfactory Leader	Caste (leader)
3	Valued Leader	Art (Droyne)
4	Highly Valued Leader	Leadership
5	Exemplary Leader	PSI +1
6	Eminent Leader	Leadership

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	Your Oytrip comes under attack. Desperate measures are required. Make a Leadership check. If you are successful, your response is correct – whether you won the fight or not. Gain your choice of Gun Combat, Melee or Tactics. If you fail, lose –D3 to STR, DEX or END due to your wounds. Make a continuation check.
2	You challenge the seniors in your Oytrip. Your challenge fails but you remain convinced you are right. You are driven from the Oytrip with some companions, who form a Kroyloss. This collapses after a time, leaving you alone in the universe. You are determined to prove you were right all along and this conviction overrides your urge to commit ritual suicide. Muster out, begin adventuring and gain an Enemy in your old Oytrip.
3	A dangerous situation arises and the Oytrip looks to you for leadership. You are able to rally the nearest Droyne and prevent things getting any worse but are injured in the process. You suffer injuries and lose –1 to each of STR, DEX and END and must make a continuation check. You gain an Ally within the Oytrip.
4	A band of non-Droyne enter the Oytrip and attempt to subvert your way of life. They cause utter mayhem and steal some items before being caught. If you take the stance that they did not know any better and should be educated rather than punished, you are ejected from the Oytrip and sent to carry out that education. Muster out and begin adventuring career with an Ally who is an outsider. If you choose to punish them, you gain three Enemies, all of them from outside your Oytrip.
5	You undertake an expedition which goes badly wrong. You are forced to survive outside Droyne society for several months. You gain an immediate level in Outsider (any) and may choose to take one level of Streetwise. However, this is a Black Skill and will diminish you as a Droyne. Make a continuation check with the negative DM for any Black Skills you may have.
6	You behave incorrectly. Your rank is reduced by –2, because this is particularly serious among Leaders. If this takes it below zero you are ejected from the Oytrip. Make a continuation check.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You work closely with your Oytrip's most senior Leaders and gain their respect. Your rank is increased by +1.
4	A Worker comes to you with serious concerns. If you support them, you gain one level of Leadership but also a Rival among your own Oytrip. If you put the uppity Worker in their place you gain a level of Caste (leader) and an Ally among your own Oytrip.
5	You are sent with a diplomatic party to a starport or installation run by non-Droyne. It is a cesspit of incorrect behaviour! If you choose to learn the ways of the outsiders, gain one level in any of Carouse, Deception, Gambler, Persuade or Streetwise. These are Black Skills and you are diminished by knowing them. If you prefer not to sully yourself, you gain nothing.
6	Your leadership keeps everything running smoothly. Gain one level in Appeal, Diplomat, or Leadership.
7	Everything is as it should be.
8	You leader an expedition into the wilds. Gain one level of Recon or Survival.
9	A non-Leader comes to you with an idea. It has merit but will upset the traditional order of things. If you supported the idea and took it to the Oytrip's senior-most Leaders, gain a level of Appeal. If you put the underling in their place, gain a level of Caste (leader).
10	You are forced to interact with among outsiders. Gain one level in Outsider (any) and a Contact outside the Oytrip.
11	You are involved in the creation or operation of a starship. Gain one level in any of Astrogation, Tactics (any) or Vacc Suit.
12	You are honoured for a time with possession or guardianship of an Ancients artefact. Gain 1 level in Ancients Tech.

DROYNE BENEFITS

Droyne do not leave their career in the normal manner of Travellers. Typically, a Droyne Traveller will have left their Oytrip – essentially their whole life and culture – behind to become an adventurer. Their end of service 'benefits' represent what the Droyne Traveller took with them rather than anything given to them. The luckiest might happen to be in possession of a starship when events cause them to part ways with the Oytrip. Others have little more than the tools of their caste with which to make their way in the wider universe.

Coyns: The Droyne is in possession of a set of 36 coyns suitable for use in a variety of rituals and predictions. These are likely to be stamped discs of industrial or precious metal – copper, steel or gold – with the set having a value of Cr2Dx200 to a collector. However, A Droyne will not willingly part with their coyns for any amount of money. If the Droyne succeeds at a Difficult (10+) PSI check, their coyns are more significant. They may not be made from any more precious material but have been associated with an important ritual or individual. Collectors might pay tens of thousands of Credits for such a set if only the Droyne could be convinced to part with them. Since that is impossible, the coyns may make the Droyne a target and lead to adventures. If so, a successful Prediction check, accompanied by a suitable ritual, might reveal the fate of the coyn set.

Ship: The Droyne Traveller is in possession of a small starship. The type is up to the Referee but it is likely to be a personal transport or similar vessel unless the Droyne was in command of a larger ship at the time they left the Oytrip. The status of this vessel is nebulous; it was never formally given to the departing Droyne but an attempt to repossess it through outsider authorities is highly unlikely. Most starport officials have no idea what Droyne ship's papers are supposed to look like, so even if they are requested it is probable they will be taken at face value. The Oytrip, if it still exists, may attempt to get its ship back but this is by no means certain. Depending on the events that led to the ship's operator leaving the Oytrip, the vessel may be effectively written off along with anyone aboard it. The Oytrip would probably attempt to repossess the vessel if the operator were foolish enough to land in their territory.

Tool Kit: A Droyne may be able to take the tools of their caste with them. For example, Technicians might have electronics or engineering tool kits (see page 113 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*).

Wings: The Droyne has a mechanical wing set. Subsequent receipt of this benefit can be taken as levels in the Flight skill. Droyne with wings large enough to fly without mechanical assistance can take all receipts of this benefit as levels in the Flight skill.

Vacc Suit: The Droyne is in possession of a high-quality vacc suit tailored to their specifications. A Warrior or Leader-of-Warriors may have combat armour instead. Subsequent receipts of this benefit can be taken as levels of the Vacc Suit skill.

USING THE COYNS

The coyns feature prominently in Droyne society. They are often used in making decisions of great and small importance. Outsiders wonder if the selection process is truly random, guided by some mystical force or the result of subconscious psionic influence. Whatever the truth, the coyns are used with great solemnity and their predictions are highly respected. Coyns can be used in-game by a Traveller using the Prediction skill (see page 190), although their interpretation and the accuracy of any prediction is for the Referee and Travellers to decide.

The process of selecting coyns can be simulated by using 1D for the row and another for the column on the Droyne Coyns table. Thus a roll of 3 and 5 would represent drawing the Heat Coyn. Interpretation depends on context but some coyns are considered 'positive' and others 'negative'. The remainder are neutral.

Droyne Coyns

Row	Column-1	Column-2	Column-3	Column-4	Column-5	Column-6
Row-1	Worker (Aydih)	Warrior (Aydin)	Drone (Aydirsoth)	Technician (Ayssath)	Sport (Praytsirv)	Leader (Aykrusk)
Row-2	Void	Soil	Air	Gas	Water	Fire
Row-3	Darkness	Cold	Noise	Signal	Heat	Light
Row-4	Humaniti	Vargr	Aslan	Droyne	Hiver	K'kree
Row-5	Genesis	Aspiration	Sacrifice	Defeat	Death	Achievement
Row-6	Beast	Mercenary	Voyages	Justice	Chance	Phoenix

Positive Coyns: Fire, Heat, Light, Droyne, Aspiration, Achievement, Justice and Phoenix
Negative Coyns: Void, Darkness, Cold, Noise, Sacrifice, Defeat, Death and Beast

For example, a Droyne Leader wonders what the future holds for her. She decides to consult the coyns, drawing six at random. She receives Death, Achievement, Chance, Light, Leader and Vargr. Each coyn can be interpreted as being somewhat literal – thus 'Aslan' would mean an Aslan or the Aslan Hierate – or much more generally. It may also be a positive/negative/neutral indicator rather than something physical. The order in which the coyns are selected is usually rigid but sometimes a prediction might be made by placing them in any order.

In this case the Droyne interprets the coyns as follows:

Death: An important event will begin with death, serious injury or perhaps the destruction of an object.
Achievement: The person or object will be prestigious or important.
Chance: The incident will be low-probability or entirely unexpected.
Light: This coyn is interpreted as 'positive' in this instance. The Droyne knows things will work out well in the end.
Leader: The Droyne must act decisively.
Vargr: Vargr are involved somehow, either individually or as an empire.

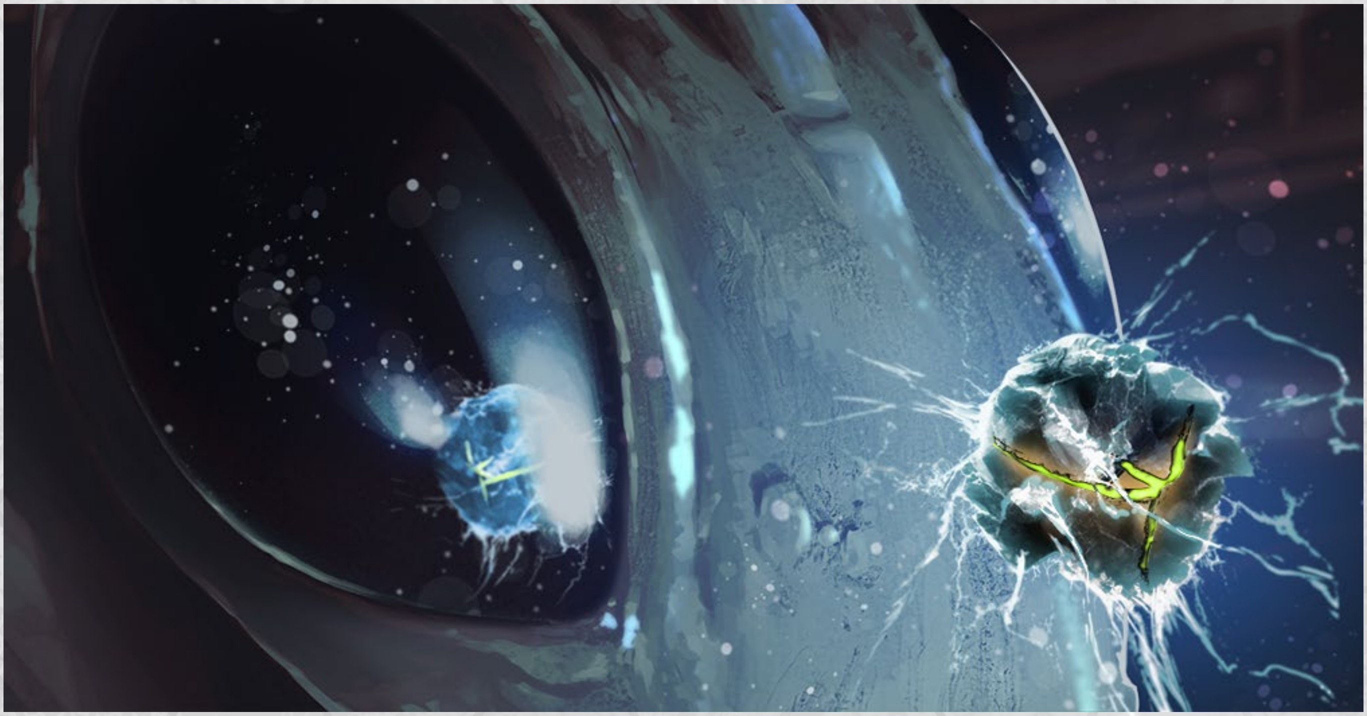
Just days later comes news that a prestigious Droyne starship has been attacked and left crippled. Artefacts of great importance have been taken from the wreck. While others are gathering evidence and seeking clues, the Droyne knows what she must do. She gathers her followers and sets out for a notorious freeport in the region, which is run by several retired Vargr spacefarers. If she is right, the artefacts will be sold at the freeport and she will be there to intercept them.

How could the coyns know what happened or was about to happen? There are many mysteries surrounding the coyns, and it may be that the process of selecting and interpreting them has done nothing more than assist the Droyne's subconscious in deciphering the available clues. Whatever the reason, the Leader now has a plan of action and intends to carry it out. Whether she is right or not is up to the Referee.

Determining Caste

A Traveller's caste can be determined using coyns instead of rolling or choosing a caste from the table on page 191. If this is done, caste is determined by selecting coyns at random until a caste is drawn. In Droyne society the sooner a caste is drawn, the more important the Droyne will be within it. Additional coyns are considered to indicate events of the Droyne's life, which may have implications for the Oytrip as a whole.

Travellers and Referees can use these coyns and their importance on the Droyne's future life as adventure hooks during a campaign.



CHAPTER-TWENTY TWO

DROYNE AS TRAVELLERS

Playing a Droyne is not easy. Being a Droyne who is not part of a community is extremely hard – Droyne are simply not prepared for this way of life by anything they experience in their life with the Oytrip. The Traveller must therefore keep in mind both how Droyne would normally act and the effects of being isolated from everything the individual knew.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE OYTRIP

A Droyne who leaves the Oytrip remains culturally a Droyne. They may be tortured by life among outsiders and might well develop some very strange personality quirks but that should not be taken as an excuse to adopt human mannerisms and behave like any other Traveller. Instead, the Traveller's way of thinking will be shaped by their caste but may evolve over time. New experiences will alter the Droyne's perceptions of the universe but for the most part they will crave the familiar and correct way of life of the Oytrip.

One coping mechanism observed in 'orphaned' Droyne is the creation of a pseudo-Kroyloss. A proper Kroyloss contains Droyne of all castes and is in many ways a mini-Oytrip. Things are done there as they are in the Oytrip and the situation is comforting. A pseudo-Kroyloss substitutes outsiders for Droyne and tries to shoehorn them into the roles played by different castes. Thus the ship's captain is obviously a Leader and the engineer is a Technician. The orphaned Droyne may be baffled and upset when these substitute-Droyne do not act correctly for the role the orphaned Droyne has created but a pseudo-Kroyloss offers the best chance for long-term survival.

Some orphaned Droyne are so desperate for the comforting correctness of the Oytrip that they become deranged. The tale of the Droyne Technician who created an imaginary Oytrip out of stray cats is almost certainly apocryphal but both Droyne and cats behave in ways that make this story borderline plausible. Other, only slightly less bizarre, coping behaviours have been observed. This retreat into delusion is very dangerous but a return to reality can be worse. The collapse of a Kroyloss (real, pseudo or imaginary) can trigger the urge to undergo Krinaytsyu.

Not all cases are so extreme but the orphaned Droyne will try to understand the vagaries of the world outside the Oytrip in terms of life within it. People will be assigned an imaginary caste and expected to behave accordingly and the Droyne will tend to think and act as they always have. Eventually the orphaned Droyne may emerge as an independent being but this will take time and even then their ingrained patterns of thinking will show from time-to-time.

Workers will tend to be obedient towards authority figures once they accept non-Droyne in that role. They will look for tasks to perform and be uncomfortable when idle. An orphaned Worker will try to help in almost any physical labour they see and will misinterpret instructions or even random conversation as orders to work. The Droyne may eventually break this conditioning but will remain a very physical person who takes the direct approach to any problem.

Warriors will also be obedient and, unlike Workers, are content to wait for a situation they can deal with. In the interim they will take care of their body, weapons and equipment. This may mean sudden bursts of physical activity such as push-ups or sprints back and forth along the ship's main corridor. At other times the Warrior will simply stand immobile for long periods. Warriors will not join a task unless asked or ordered to; their job is to guard everyone else while they work and it will simply not occur to a Warrior that he is expected to help unstick the ATV from this mud pool. Even if they break their old way of thinking, a Warrior is still inclined towards violence – and if violence is not necessary or will not solve the problem, then the problem belongs to someone else.

Technicians will fiddle with things. They will dismantle devices – not to see how they work but to practice in case they need to repair one. A Technician left alone in a room full of technology will learn all they can about it but will probably not think of actually doing anything with it. They will latch on to any technical job they see and try to assist, even if that means little more than passing spanners to those doing the actual work. Technicians may also attempt to organise workspaces, perhaps rearranging the galley to promote efficiency in particular tasks or conducting a visual inspection and inventory of every tool aboard a ship. Eventually they may break through this conditioning but a Technician will still struggle with the concept that they could solve that problem without waiting to be told to do it.

Drones are likely to suffer the most when separated from the Oytrip. Those who survive will tend to adopt a nurturing role. A Drone might make an excellent administrative or even executive officer aboard a ship but a terrible captain. More likely, they will seek domestic problems to solve, acting as a mediator between crewmates or something of a snitch whenever someone does something the leader of the group really needs to know about – in the Drone's perception, anyway. A Drone might find a comfortable niche running the domestic side of a starship, taking over the galley and acting as a steward or may start offering spiritual guidance to all and sundry. Even once acclimatised to the outside world, Drones are inclined to find a community to become the heart of.

Sports are the best adapted of all castes to survive in the outside world but their actions have no meaning if not taken on behalf of a community. Sports will outwardly seem well adjusted, acting on their own initiative and apparently being quite comfortable among non-Droyne. However, they are driven to seek a community or cause to serve and can become fanatically – if quietly – loyal to that cause. There is no guarantee the Sport really understands the community they act on behalf of, which can lead to serious gaffes. A fully adjusted Sport will still tend to think in terms of 'my ship and crew, wrong or right' and may be willing to take actions that will horrify their crewmates.

Leaders are capable of subordinating themselves to higher Leaders but the situation for crewmates is a bit like keeping a wolf. To remain alpha, the senior members of whatever group the Leader joins must always be alpha. Friendly behaviour will seem like subordination to a Leader, who will naturally be inclined to take charge. Outsiders who treat the Leader as a subordinate will have few problems but once the alpha/beta situation no longer exists the Leader will unconsciously challenge their superiors all the time. This is not malice or lack of respect; it is simply that a Leader must lead. Orphaned Leaders can do well in a very formal environment like a military unit or a warship but the typical free trader crew are likely to find him insufferable. Once a Leader acclimatises, they may begin to accept the new and less formal social dynamic. They will still be inclined to find problems and take charge of solving them.

INCORRECTNESS AND INDIVIDUALITY

One underlying factor throughout Droyne society is the concept of 'correctness'. Droyne are rigid in their thinking, largely due to their highly specialised caste structure. Being surrounded by others who behave 'correctly' is comforting to a Droyne and the converse is also true. 'Incorrect' behaviour and situations are disturbing – and incorrectness is the order of the day outside the Oytrip.

An isolated Droyne is bombarded with incorrectness every waking minute. Being unable to instantly identify Leaders or Drones among people thronging a starport, seeing obvious Warriors doing what Workers should be or a Technician directing others in their tasks... these are assaults on the Droyne's sense of rightness. Being outside the Oytrip is like being cast adrift in a sea of chaos. The Droyne cannot comprehend much of what is going on and will be fearful of not knowing what to do. The idea that nobody minds if the Droyne randomly decides to read a datanet entry or goes for a coffee is incomprehensible and distinctly frightening.

The worst aspect for many orphaned Droyne is that they do not know what to do. Even a Leader or Sport is lost without a cause to serve. The Oytrip was everything and decisions were based on its best interests. Now, with no Oytrip there is no starting point for the decision-making process. For other castes this may be worse. There was always someone to tell them what to do or well established procedures and rituals to guide their progress.

Thus, to the puzzlement of most other species, it is freedom that most frightens orphaned Droyne. They know they are expected to act correctly but they have no idea what correct behaviour would be. Thinking for yourself is considered by most races to be a fundamental right and responsibility but for a Droyne it is not much short of an abomination.

A Droyne in this situation has three choices – somehow impose a semblance of order and correctness on their immediate surroundings, throw away everything that makes them a Droyne and embrace the chaos of freedom or meditate to a quiet and dignified death. Those who take the former path tend to become obsessive and sometimes paranoid but can be 'saved' by reintroduction into a correct society. Those who embrace freedom of thought and action are beyond salvation. The correct course of action, according to other Droyne, was to die but the individual has chosen instead to live as incorrectness personified.

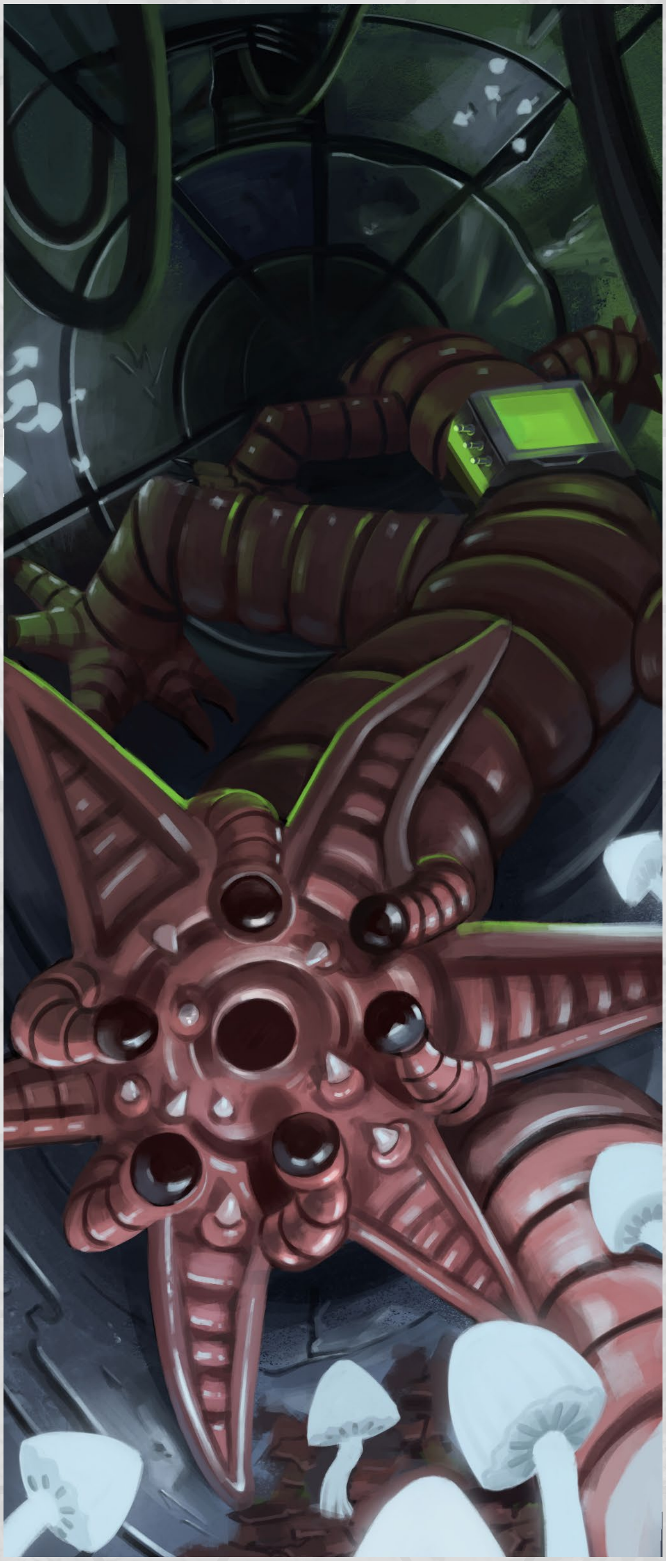
Such people are less welcome than outsiders in an Oytrip. They may be pressured to commit suicide, or even killed, and certainly they will be refused entry. The one exception is a Droyne who returns to an Oytrip to die there. This gesture is honoured and respected, and of course it would be incorrect to lie about the reason for the individual's return, so the true motives of an infiltrator will not be suspected by right-thinking Droyne until they fail to begin the Krinaytsyu ritual.

Likewise, someone who claims to want to return to the Oytrip but who has not – apparently – become irretrievably incorrect will be permitted entry and may begin a ritual of subordination and purification. Even if the Droyne's participation is duplicitous, the lure of a return to an orderly and correct life is strong. The orphaned Droyne might find they cannot bear to be without an Oytrip any longer and revert to their old way of life – or they may complete the ritual then undergo Krinaytsyu.

Someone who lies to gain entry to an Oytrip, deceitfully undergoes the rituals of return and still remains a free-thinking individual has in truth ceased to be a Droyne in all but physical form. It is not clear what such an individual might achieve but they will achieve it as an individual – a unique being in the body of a Droyne. It is likely they would be viewed as an abomination among right-thinking Droyne.

THE HIVERS

The race known as Hivers are a highly unusual species, both physically and culturally. Much of what is ‘known’ about them is contradictory and confusing, although physical facts at least can be confirmed by observation. Hivers are highly intelligent and have built a vast interstellar culture known to outsiders as the Hive Federation. Within it are a great many intelligent species, each optimised to a particular role. The Hivers do not dominate their Federation in the usual sense but have apparently created a culture of cooperation within which each species has a place and is content to remain within it. They are attributed a powerful ability to manipulate others, enabling them to co-opt whole cultures without conflict or the possibility of later revolt.



PHYSIOLOGY

An adult Hiver resembles a fleshy dome about one metre across, with six limbs spaced equally around the circumference. For this reason they are sometimes referred to as ‘starfish’. All of the limbs are about a metre long and end in manipulator tentacles. Limbs can function as hands or feet interchangeably although two of the limbs have additional functions. One is a ‘head’ with eyes on stalks; it does not contain the brain and is thus not really a head in the usual sense, but beings with heads tend to think of it that way. The opposite limb is more or less the same as the other legs/arms but has a single modified finger for transferring genetic material.

Hivers vary in base colour from pink to tan, with brown or grey patches which become more prominent with age. Their skin is leathery and tough, with a respiratory stoma (or blow-hole) at the top of the dorsal hump. The stoma connects to a set of six-lobed lungs. In some individuals these are lined with olfactory membranes; in others they are not, so only around half of all Hivers have any sense of smell. At the centre of the body is the brain case, surrounded by a 12-chambered heart in the shape of a ring.

On the ventral surface of the body is a super-cloaca through which food is taken, waste removed and genetic material exchanged. This opening, along with the respiratory stoma, can be shut off at will by internal sphincters.

Hivers have only one gender. Genetic material is routinely (and apparently subconsciously) passed between Hivers when they meet by a process of 'handshaking' with the reproductive limb, then into the cloaca. Handshaking also serves a social function and appears to have a beneficial effect on the Hivers' mental state.

Hivers have six eyeballs on their primary limb. Three see in the usual visual spectrum, three in the infrared. Between the eyestalks and a little behind them are six ears. This limb can be used for stability when moving but as this restricts vision it is more common for a Hiver to walk on five limbs with the 'head' up. Hiver hearing is roughly the same as that of humans but peak response is in the very low frequencies. Hivers have no vocal chords, relying on visual signals for communication.

REPRODUCTION

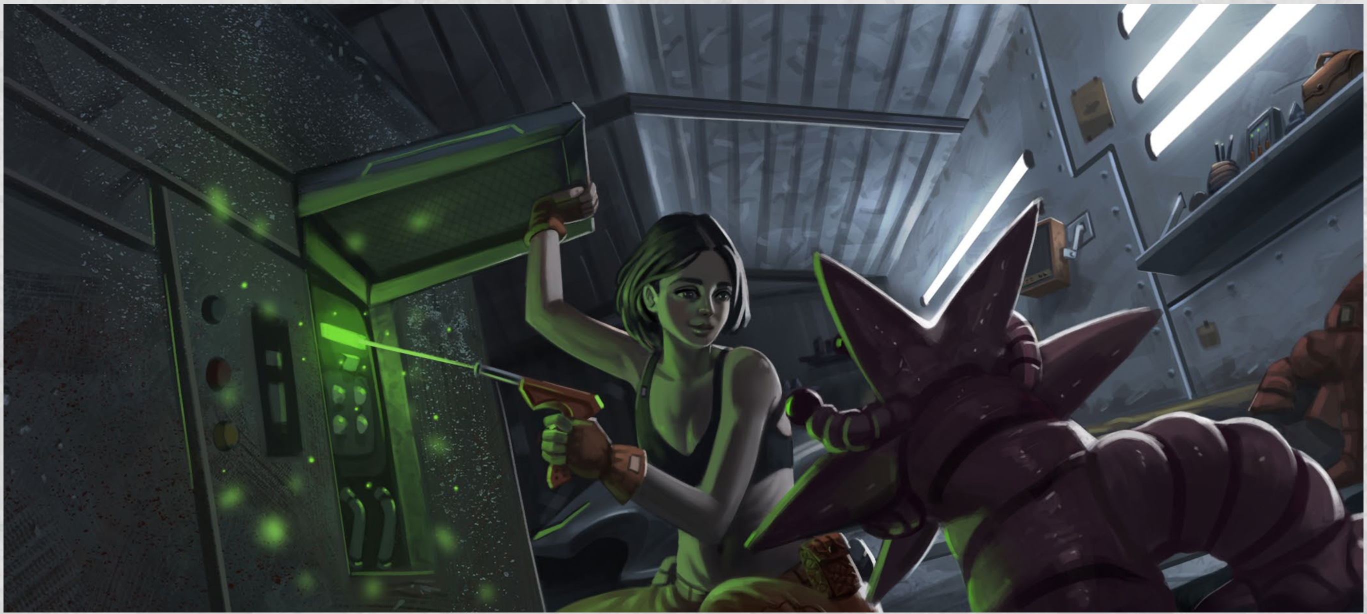
Reproductive cells are generated internally and stored in a reproductive pouch. When Hivers 'shake hands' they transfer some of these cells from their own reproductive pouch to that of another Hiver by way of the reproductive limb. Even without this process, a Hiver will produce offspring but they will be genetically identical to the parent. Handshaking ensures that a healthy generic mix is maintained and emissaries are often sent over long distances for no other purpose than to shake hands with everyone they meet.

Approximately once every 40 days a Hiver will produce a larva, which drops out of its cloaca and crawls away. Hivers have no emotional attachment to their offspring at this stage of their development and no parental instinct whatsoever. Larvae are killed if they are inconvenient or if circumstances are not right for the development of young Hivers. Those that survive their parent fend for themselves as animals for a year or so until they begin to develop intelligence. At this point, the young Hiver is driven to seek out a community and will be accepted as a juvenile if it manages to reach one. From this point on the young Hiver is a person and receives education and protection like any other member of the community.

PSYCHOLOGY, MANIPULATION AND PSIONICS

Hivers are notorious for their ability to manipulate others into doing what they want. This capability is due to their need for interspecies cooperation during early evolution and their innate desire to avoid conflict. The extent to which Hivers can manipulate others is a matter for great speculation and no little alarm among other species. Perhaps it is overplayed and the Hivers have simply taken credit for lucky circumstances. Perhaps the opposite is true and the Hivers are secretly running Charted Space. Or is that what they want everyone to think?

Hivers evolved on the world of Guaran in the Ricenden sector. It is likely their distant ancestors were driven from the seas by predators, surviving by colonising the land where few predators at that time existed. The proto-Hivers were still vulnerable and sought protection through a cooperative relationship with a large burrowing creature called a snohl. Snohls still exist on Guaran, mostly in carefully preserved wilderness areas. Hivers are comforted by their presence for reasons that cannot be explained by any chemical, pheromone or similar mechanism.



Snohls are large, with individuals reaching 1,000 kilograms or sometimes more. They build extensive burrows, which contain considerable amounts of trash. The proto-Hivers benefited the snohls by cleaning up their nests and gained both protection and a steady diet of the snohls' leavings. The proto-Hivers' primary diet was fungus of various sorts – which is still a staple for Hivers today – and over time they learned to farm fungus in the burrows, albeit in a crude manner.

Initially, proto-Hivers were solitary, forming a relationship with a single snohl and mating when burrows intersected with those of another partnership. However, Guaran began to undergo serious climate change – probably an ice age – and the proto-Hivers had to change their behaviour to survive. Evolutionary pressure resulted in greater intelligence and the habit of cooperating with others encountered whilst foraging for food over ever-wider distances. This eventually resulted in communities forming, with some proto-Hivers tending the fungus 'farms' and others out foraging for food in an increasingly barren landscape.

Proto-Hivers learned to communicate with one another and perhaps to persuade others to do what they wanted. The end result was the development of an early Hiver culture based around large 'nests' of cooperative individuals. Hivers have an instinctive aversion to violence and confrontation, so the usual development of a class of rulers-by-force did not occur. Instead, the most persuasive Hivers came to the fore, laying the groundwork for a society built upon manipulation rather than the threat of consequences.

Today, Hivers still prefer to quietly get others to do what they want. They rarely ask directly for anything and seem to feel the need to exercise their skills at manipulation on a constant basis. Many Hivers are not very manipulative and take non-leadership roles in their society. Others use their abilities to get what they want and some have taken manipulation to an art form. It is not entirely clear what the criteria for the title Manipulator might be but some Hivers bear it and most do not. It is likely that the title is popularly awarded in recognition of a major and large-scale manipulation of others undertaken by the individual. The highest leaders among Hiver society almost universally use the title Manipulator.

The means by which Hivers go about manipulating others are varied and mostly subtle. A manipulation might be nothing more complex than constantly leaving objects where others can trip over them, until someone gets annoyed and demands everyone tidy up after themselves. In this manner the Hiver cures the messy habits of fellow crewmembers or passengers without being seen to do anything. Other manipulations are long and complex, involving communication, misdirection and the use of individuals to influence others. What is certain is that these manipulations are not psionic in nature. No Hiver has ever been determined to have any psionic abilities.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TOOL USE

Hivers have no vocal chords and cannot produce sounds resembling speech. Their ability to communicate relies on what is effectively sign language, mostly using the fingers of the primary limb but occasionally a full-body performance. Non-Hivers are at an enormous disadvantage when trying to copy this sign language, since they have the wrong shape and number of limbs. However, Hivers can hear and can learn the languages of non-Hivers and any intelligent being who can see can learn to interpret Hiver sign language.

More commonly, Hivers use a device called a Voder, which translates the movements of the Hiver into audible sounds or transmitted written messages. Using a Voder requires some practice; it is not uncommon for young Hivers to accidentally trigger the device, with the result that the Voder tries to turn the gesture of looking under a galley chair for something into an intelligible sentence. This can be hilarious but given the reputation of Hivers there will always be those who wonder why it had its Voder make that specific sound or whether it meant to draw attention to the fact it was looking under the chairs. Paranoid people end up seeing manipulations everywhere… and perhaps they are right.

There is a written form of the Hiver language, using ideographs to represent a stylised version of their visual signals. There is a 'simple alphabet', as it were, for transmitting normal speech and an 'extended alphabet' for complex concepts. This is necessary since an ideograph is a still image and Hiver 'speech' is characterised by constant movement. Those working in fields where complex ideas are written down must learn thousands of individual symbols. Few non-Hivers, even within the Hive Federation, use the Hiver language in either written or sign form. Instead, the common language of the Federation is Gurvin.

Gurvin is the language of a race of that name, encountered early in the Hivers' exploration of their interstellar neighbourhood. Enough similarities existed between Hiver and Gurvin, in terms of structure and grammar at least, for it to be easy to learn. As more races joined the Federation Gurvin was chosen as the standard written and spoken language throughout Hiver territory. Usually, when a Hiver is communicating using its Voder it will be signing in Gurvin, not Hiver, although the Voder may be set to speak in almost any language.

Many outsiders think Gurvin is the Hiver language and assume that their failure to comprehend some gestures is down to a lack of proficiency. Indeed, most just listen to the Voder and do not even try to read the gestures. This means that a Hiver can talk to the outsiders in Gurvin voiced in Anglic by its Voder, whilst conveying some completely different meaning to another Hiver or someone who understands their native language.

Hivers do not have hands in the usual sense. Their manipulative appendages are arranged in a circle and more like tentacles than fingers. This makes using devices made for non-Hivers very difficult and vice versa. Hiver equipment tends to have bulb-shaped handles and grips. A Hiver can keep an imperatively tight grip on an object that is the right general shape and size but cannot mimic many tasks possible for a being equipped with normal hands. For example, a Hiver cannot climb a rock face by wedging fingers and toes into cracks, because it is not equipped for this task. It could climb a conventional ladder – albeit in an unconventional way – and could zip up a vertical wall with suitable handles.

Hiver body shape makes most non-Hiver tools impossible to use but this suits Hivers most of the time. After all, what they excel at is getting others to do their work for them. To someone who does not understand Hivers, seeing one struggling with a screwdriver might seem amusing. For those who know a bit more about them, it may be tragic – this Hiver is not merely failing to tighten a screw, it is failing to be a Hiver.

FOOD AND MEDICINE

Hivers are descended from scavengers and are essentially omnivorous. They tend not to worry so much about the state of their food as other creatures. If the ship's pilot leaves a half-eaten sandwich lying around for a week, a Hiver crewmate might manipulate someone into clearing it up or might just eat it. Of course, it is not always possible to say whether eating the mouldy sandwich was itself a manipulation…

The modern Hiver diet consists largely of fungus. Hivers do have a rudimentary sense of taste but can tolerate food that would be disgusting to other races. Those working with other races tend to eat in private or use pre-packaged food blocks which are more or less odourless. This does not bother Hivers – there are no Hiver restaurant critics for a good reason – but it does potentially cause a problem. Hivers are particularly prone to deficiency diseases and must carefully balance their diet. This means at least some meals must be composed of particularly stinky fungus or scavenged food containing the right nutrients. In this context 'food' has a much wider meaning than most races would consider.

Control of deficiency diseases is the single biggest medical problem faced by Hivers. Meal packages and supplements must be constantly changed to prevent deficiencies appearing and even then this is not always successful. The most notable manifestation of this phenomenon is the loss of the sense of smell in those Hivers that have one. This can occur apparently at random but the cause is usually some minute imbalance in the Hiver's diet.

Resistance to infections and non-deficiency diseases is high. This is largely due to the origins of the Hiver species as scavengers and the fact that larvae spend a year in the wild before becoming juvenile Hivers. Those with a weak immune system do not live long enough to mature. The secretions that line the walls of a Hiver's cloaca are also highly effective in killing bacteria and parasites. Indeed, 'Hiver spit' can be used as paint stripper.

Hivers have a limited ability to regenerate tissue damage. In adults this is limited to sections of organ or skin, fingers and perhaps part of a limb. Larvae can regenerate whole limbs if necessary. A severed finger typically takes around 20 weeks to fully regrow. Eyes, ears and the like can repair themselves if most of the organ remains but a wholly lost eye is gone forever. Hiver medicine, other than emergency closing of wounds, revolves around stimulating the body's natural repair or defence mechanisms. It is not known if any anagathic compound works on Hivers; they do not seem to approve of their use and are not known to produce any similar pharmaceuticals.

It is believed that Hiver have the ability to shut down their metabolism at will, settling into a painless death. The Hivers themselves will not confirm or deny this ability exists; it has been inferred from statements and documents originating with associated races. The possibility exists that Hivers can hibernate by stopping just short of total shutdown but again there is no clear evidence of this.

CHAPTER - TWENTY FOUR

HISTORY OF THE HIVE FEDERATION

Each of the races within the Hive Federation has its own unique history until joining the Federation. After this, arguably the history of the Federation is the history of its members. There are those who seem to disagree. The Ithklur, for example, proudly maintain that they are still independent. In their version of events they have taken advantage of the Hive Federation, allowing it to provide dull and mundane services whilst leaving the Ithklur themselves to pursue what they consider important, a mix of seeking spiritual enlightenment and opportunities to engage in violent mayhem. The Hivers would appear to hold the opposite view; the Ithklur have been pigeonholed as warriors for the Federation and convinced it was their idea. In reality the truth is likely to be a little of both.

Any history of the Hive Federation runs immediately into a major problem – there are no non-contradictory sets of facts on record anywhere and many of the 'facts' within an apparently accurate account are false, misleading or incomplete. Hivers have an... interesting... relationship with facts and the truth. Both are tools to be used, shaped, sharpened and occasionally cast aside and replaced with something else. According to some Hiver Manipulators, all contradictory facts are actually true from someone's perspective and figuring out who believed what can be highly enlightening.

Of course, this is a misleading statement. 'Facts' in this context can better be described as 'things a particular Hiver Manipulator wanted others to believe and which were probably, but not necessarily, based on the truth'. 'Truth' on the other hand might be translated as 'what the Hiver who set down that particular set of facts believed' – and of course there is every chance that one set of conveniently-amended 'facts' was based on the 'facts' another Hiver had manipulated the writer to believe.

Somewhere, in this tortuous maze of distortion, obfuscation, agenda and lies-told-for-fun there is an account of Hiver history just waiting to be unravelled. It might be possible to unpick the distortions generation-by-generation, based on the known or suspected agenda of the Manipulators in question, to finally arrive at the original truth. Such an undertaking is likely beyond the abilities of mortals and will lead in all probability to further confusion and perhaps madness.

However, some facts can be corroborated with others and cross-referenced with observations made by those beyond the reach of the Hivers' influence. Physical phenomena make some claims impossible and enable accurate dating of others. It is possible to piece together a reasonably accurate picture of what happened over the centuries but establishing why any given action succeeded, failed or was taken at all remains problematic.

Among the facts accepted to be generally true is the notion that Hivers evolved on Guaran from scavengers who developed a cooperative existence with their own and other species. Climate change appear to have forced an increase in intelligence and cooperativeness, eventually producing creatures recognisable as Hivers. Over the next 100,000 years or so they learned to make and use more sophisticated tools. Communities grew larger and began to maintain regular contact with one another, ensuring the spread of both information and genetic material. A tendency towards curiosity about everything and anything became a Hiver trait at this time, leading to new discoveries and eventually the rise of civilisation.

THE HIVERS ON GUARAN

At the end of their ice age, the Hivers were concentrated in a relatively narrow strip of habitable land but expanded out of it as soon as the glaciers retreated. Their primary racial traits of curiosity and cooperation drove them to explore the newly opened lands and establish colonies there. These grew into what are generally known as 'nests', although to Hivers the term has wider connotations than a mere burrowed living space.

Increased tool use naturally led to the creation of industrial processes and a rapid industrial revolution. Groupings of nests became proto-cities and at the same time developed a sort of corporate status. Individuals moved from one nest to another as they pleased but the nest-group itself was a political and economic entity. Specialisation increased over time, with certain nest-clusters coming to dominate their economic sector whilst others pursued entirely different goals. Some specialised in science, some in exploration and others in art. Meanwhile, the Hivers built surface ships and began venturing across the seas of their homeworld.

Hiver society also matured during this time. The notion of manipulation as the driving social force became accepted, creating a unique society that continues more or less unchanged to this day. The underlying principle was that cooperation is vital to the well-being of a society but individuals drive long-term change and growth. It became accepted that the society of a nest could and would be shaped by the will of a few individuals, despite them having no formal positions of authority. These powerful figures became known as Manipulators and are recorded in history as culture heroes as well as movers and shakers.

Wacky Hiver Theories: Hive Minds

The Hivers were a puzzle to the first races they encountered and continued to baffle scientists as they expanded further. The name 'Hiver' comes from a theory propounded in the Imperium that they shared some kind of hive mind, possibly including the other members of the Hive Federation. Nests were originally referred to as hives. Greater understanding more or less expunged this theory but a few vestiges remain. One of them is the name 'Hiver'. Since the Hiver word for themselves is a combination of tentacle and body movement of certain intensities, it has no meaningful translation and the label 'Hiver' stuck.

There are still those who believe the hive mind 'theory' and usually ascribe all manner of capabilities to this uber-being. One spinoff that does the rounds from time-to-time is the idea that Hivers can somehow integrate outsiders into their hive mind and learn all their secrets. Specialist headwear can prevent this, naturally.

Industrialisation and rapid expansion had the effect of destroying the wildernesses near to Hiver nests. These were essential to breeding, since the larvae needed such an area to mature before returning to civilisation. The percentage of surviving larvae plummeted and the Hiver population began to shrink rapidly. Nests took their own measures, cleaning up and preserving the local wilderness but the damage was so great that a worldwide effort was required.

The instigation and coordination of this planetwide clean-up is generally lauded as a great Manipulation – signified by a capital M – which got an entire planetary population moving in the same direction for a while. However, some have pointed out that the 'manipulation' might have been nothing more than a reasoned argument demonstrating what needed to be done and why. Hivers are prone to describe any action that gets someone else to do something, or seems to, as a manipulation.

In this context a Hiver might consider it has manipulated the crewmember sitting opposite into passing the salt, when in reality all it has done is make its Voder say 'pass the salt please'. This habit of describing all such actions, from simple requests or physical gambits like standing in the way so that someone has to walk around them to grandiose plans affecting millions of people, as manipulations is viewed as rather silly by some outsiders. Others wonder why the Hivers want to blur the line between real manipulations and normal interactions. The most likely explanation is that they genuinely think that way – any means of getting someone else to take an action is a manipulation to a Hiver.

However it happened, the clean-up was a success. Areas that had become desert were reclaimed and previously barren regions turned into thriving wilderness. Industrial processes were limited and modified to prevent further damage and respect for nature became ingrained in Hiver culture. Ever since, all Hiver nests are surrounded by a wide belt of wilderness that is carefully protected and supported. Intervention is acceptable when the wilderness is threatened by outside factors such as drought but for the most part nature is permitted to take its course.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE JUMP DRIVE

Expansion into space was inevitable for a species so curious about the universe. Colonies were built on other bodies in the Guaran system, complete with artificially wild areas. In the year -10217 by their own reckoning (-4678 Imperial) the Hivers launched their first starship to another system using newly discovered jump drive technology. This was an inferior design to those developed by most other races, prone to breakdowns and a rapid deterioration over successive jumps. Ten jumps was considered the absolute maximum that could be attempted without a complete overhaul and since only jump-1 capability was available the Hivers remained confined to an area equating to four subsectors.

In -4212 by the Imperial calendar, the Hivers developed a new version of the jump drive that was far more reliable. Rapid expansion followed, along with exploration covering a wide area. Since interstellar flight became possible six centuries previously the Hivers had encountered a few sentient species but all were in a primitive state of development. Co-opting them into the Hive Federation had been a fairly easy and more importantly safe endeavour. In -3986 the Hivers encountered the Ithklur, who were an entirely different matter.

The Ithklur, upright bipeds with an aggressive nature, had developed spacecraft but not the jump drive when the Hivers arrived in their home system. They reacted to the Hivers with hostility, resulting in a withdrawal and quarantine of the Ithklur homeworld. The Hivers referred to it as Tryylin in Gurvin and began cautiously studying the Ithklur before making new attempts at contact.

For around 1,000 the Hivers interacted carefully with the Ithklur, pulling back at times to return later when the current wave of hostility had passed. According to Hiver sources they carried out a series of manipulations on the Ithklur, making them more biddable whilst retaining and redirecting their aggression. Eventually the Ithklur joined the Hive Federation and became its primary combat forces.

CONFLICT WITH THE K'KREE

First contact between the Hive Federation and the Two Thousand Worlds of the K'Kree was in -2045 and the first conflict came soon after. By -2038 the K'Kree had overrun several Federation worlds and took their usual measures – any meat-eater that would not become vegetarian was killed and many were not given any choice. It is not clear if this manipulation-by-force was objectionable to Hivers or indeed whether they could have complied. They could subsist on fungus but a suitable wilderness for breeding had to include predators to ensure only some larvae survived. The other races of the Federation might be able to convert but the Hivers probably could not. Since the K'Kree seemed intent on expanding into Hive Federation territory and co-existence was impossible, the only alternative was to fight.

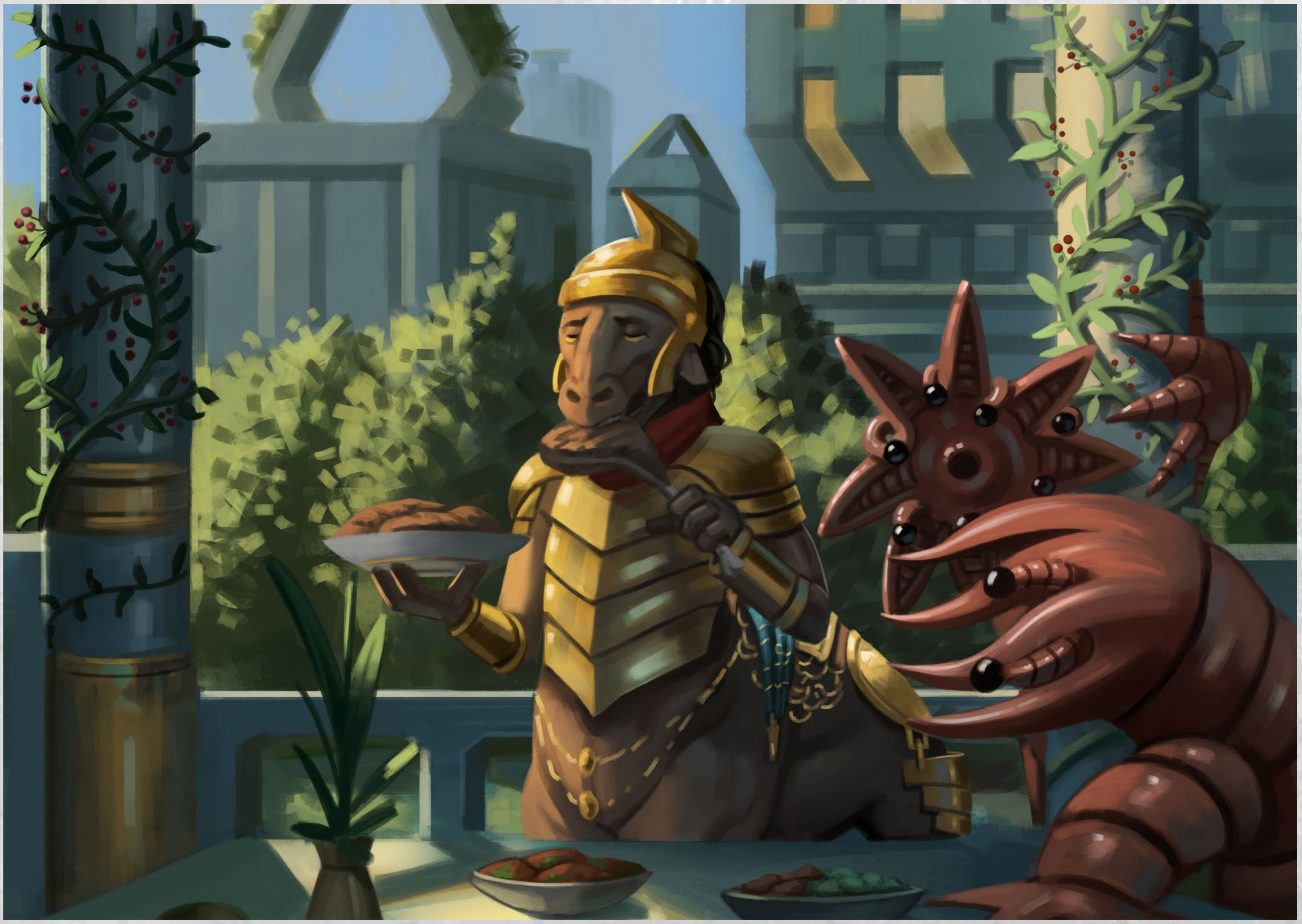
The Hive Federation had good ground forces, populated mainly by Ithklur, but their navy was virtually non-existent. Up to this point there had been no real need for such a force and the few armed ships available were either overwhelmed or forced to retreat. Massive expansion of the navy was begun, taking advantage of a K'Kree pause to consolidate, but according to Hiver sources the war was won by other means.

In -2019 the Hivers intimated they were about to surrender to the K'Kree and received a delegation of high-ranking dignitaries. At the peace conference the Hivers revealed their masterstroke. On certain worlds – most sources claim four – they had been secretly manipulating the K'Kree population. Among the social traits prevalent on those worlds was a liking for meat sauces and a desire to be alone at least some of the time. As militant herbivore herd-creatures, the K'Kree considered this to be a perversion of their very being. When the Hivers threatened to do the same to the whole K'Kree species they agreed to an armistice.

By means of this great Manipulation the Hivers created a secure border and regained their territory. The K'Kree sterilised the 'corrupted' worlds, which remain quarantined to this day. The border zone is heavily guarded by both sides but there has been no further major conflict between the two states. However, the Ithklur tell a different version of the tale in which there was no clever manipulation – only a daring and opportunistic lie.

According to the Ithklur, ground forces cut off on various worlds when the Hiver fleet retreated continued to fight as best they could. Weapons and ammunition were taken from the bodies of dead enemies and so was food. The Ithklur had no stomach for the vegetarian rations of the K'Kree warriors but their bodies were perfectly edible. This is exactly what the K'Kree were campaigning to exterminate; they believed that all meat-eaters would sooner or later try to eat them.

When these worlds were relieved by the new Hiver fleet, the situation was revealed and a Hiver leader known as Tschudi took advantage of it. Tschudi arrived at the peace negotiations with lurid images of half-eaten K'Kree and a completely fictitious record of his orders to carry out manipulations. Tschudi even claimed that K'Kree were eating each other. This triggered the reaction known to have occurred and brought about the armistice. Tschudi was declared a Manipulator for this deed and whether the Hiver or the Ithklur version is true, most Hivers would contend that taking advantage of the existing circumstances is an entirely acceptable part of manipulation. Ultimately, Tschudi did hoodwink the K'Kree into an armistice when they thought they had won and that alone deserves recognition as a great Manipulation. As to the Ithklur, they have a saying 'We cause the dying, Hivers do the lying'. There is an undercurrent of resentment about this but most Ithklur find it unaccountably hilarious.



CHAPTER-TWENTY FIVE

RACES OF THE HIVE FEDERATION

The Hive Federation includes over 170 races, each with a unique history until they joined the Federation. Since then, the activities of any race have been intertwined with those of all the others and with the Federation itself. It has not been possible to obtain records created by these races before the Hivers contacted them. Such records might exist but must be hidden or forgotten. Thus the known history of these races is controlled by the Hivers. Given their propensity for altering facts to suit their purposes any information on the races of the Federation, even pre-contact, must be viewed with suspicion.

What all member races have in common is specialisation in one niche. There are warriors and scientists, accountants and mechanics. The member races can perform basic tasks well enough to get by without the others but where most species produce a range of high-capability individuals and may excel in multiple areas, those within the Hive Federation are geared to one primary function. It is unlikely this is accidental; in all probability the Hivers shaped each race into a form that would most benefit the Federation as a whole – and of course the Federation is controlled by the Hivers.

THE GURVIN

The Gurvin are hexapods but have more specialised limbs than Hivers. Their front limbs are arms, the rear ones legs and the pair in between can act as either. A Gurvin is about 1.75 metres long from muzzle to tail and can stand upright on the rear legs. Males are about half as intelligent as females, sentient but lacking creativity or initiative. Traditionally – at least according to the official histories, males would range over a small area near their home community hunting for food whilst the far more intelligent females made all the decisions. Today, male Gurvin are rarely seen away from their homeworlds but females travel widely. They are the primary financial experts of the Hive Federation and often portrayed as almost obsessed with money. Similarly, Gurvin are notoriously lacking in altruism and expect payment for all services or assistance.

THE ITHKLUR

The Ithklur are upright bipeds, generally humanoid in body form but with a short, heavy tail for balance. They stand about 2 metres tall and mass up to 200 kilograms with hands ending in formidable claws. Ithklur are naturally aggressive, although Hiver records claim to have curbed these tendencies to a significant degree. It is believed that Ithklur intelligence is tied to violent behaviour and that the manipulations that made them controllable also made them rather stupid. The Ithklur dispute this notion vigorously and often physically. Ithklur serve as combat troops for the most part and contend that they joined the Hive Federation because it suited them to do so. This viewpoint holds that the Ithklur outsourced decision-making and boring economic matters to the Federation rather than them being co-opted as warriors. Many Ithklur refer to Hivers as 'taxi drivers', who take the Ithklur to interesting places without any need to worry about the details. Of all the races of the Hive Federation, Ithklur are the most irreverent about the Hivers and will sometimes engage in mild disobedience just to mess with them.

THE ZA'TACHK

The Za'tachk are quadrupeds who can use any of their limbs as an arm or leg at need. They were one of the earliest races contacted by the Hivers and proved very easy to co-opt into the Federation. Za'tachk are nonaggressive and cooperative by nature and today are obsessive about details. Whether they were always like that is an open question but Za'tachk are often encountered as pursers aboard starships or as accountants, clerks and the like. They can be infuriating for outsiders to deal with, insisting on every detail of paperwork being perfect. A single misplaced apostrophe in a 120-page contract can result in rejection but on the other hand Za'tachk very rarely make mistakes or lose track of items. They fulfil many administrative roles throughout the Federation and are rarely employed in any other capacity.

CHAPTER - TWENTY SIX

MODERN HIVER SOCIETY

Hiver society has no formal rank structure. The nature of Hiver reproduction is such that hereditary transfers of position or goods are entirely absent; an individual supports and receives support from its nest but other concepts of family simply do not exist. Some observers claim that Hiver society is completely egalitarian, with individuals free to do as they please and rise as high as they are able. There is some truth in this but it is far from being the whole story. Hivers do not jockey for position and power in the same way as other races but they do attempt to control one another. This concept of manipulation is at the very heart of Hiver society.

A Hiver cannot get another Hiver to do as it wants by means of position held, as no such positions exist. There is no equivalent to a manager giving an order and punishing those who do not obey through the company's disciplinary system. Instead, a Hiver who wants something doing must manipulate others into doing it – every time, all the time. Those with little talent for manipulation cannot get much done this way but the best manipulators can be very effective. Short-term manipulations are useful for getting a simple task done but for large-scale or long-term undertakings the key is to get others to want to take part or even to use their own skills to recruit additional participants.

Thus leadership status among Hivers is, in theory at least, tenuous and under constant challenge. In practice those who are good at getting others to do what they want tend to do so on a near-constant basis but a Hiver is only as good as its last manipulation. Reputation as a good manipulator helps to some extent but ultimately leadership comes down to constant effort and favourable circumstances.

SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Hivers have few social distinctions in the usual sense and most are based upon stages of life. Larvae are not people and for the most part not considered to be potential-people. They are killed if they are a nuisance or circumstances are not right for raising young and those lost to natural causes or predation are not missed. At about a year old the larva becomes a Yearling and is now a person. Yearlings will be protected by their adopted nest and educated until they are ready to join society as an adult.

The fingers of yearlings have developed sufficiently that they can grasp objects and development continues until around age 14. The individual is known as a Yearling throughout this period. Upon reaching maturity, the individual is known as an Adult. This is the only social distinction most Hivers receive or need; Adults are full members of their nest and free to prosper according to their ability to manipulate others.

Those that excel in a field eventually become known as Seniors. This does not specifically indicate age, although most Seniors work for many years before attaining the status. Seniors may be recognised for their ability to manipulate others but can also receive recognition for what they achieve rather than the means used to achieve it. Thus there are Seniors who are scientists, explorers or artists.

Those who achieve recognition for a major Manipulation are awarded the title of Manipulator. There is no formal significance to this but there does not need to be; someone who can attain this title has demonstrated they can get people to do more or less anything. The title is recognition, not an enabler. Likewise there are no formal criteria for Manipulator status. Arguably, the way to obtain it is to get others to award it to you – anyone able to do that is worthy of the title.

The building-block of Hiver society is the nest. A nest is usually a physical locality, although it may be part of a larger structure, but more importantly it is an association of individuals. There is no sense of family like most other races have but a nest is a similar concept. However, individuals can leave their nest at any time and join another. A nest is led by one of its members but who that is can change from one day to the next. The leaders of a nest is considered a Senior by the members of its nest but may not be awarded that status by outsiders.

Groups of nests can become large enough to be considered cities, which are governed along the same principles as Hiver society in general. There is no formal government but certain nests will specialise in providing the functions a government normally would. Others specialise in coordinating and liaising with other cities, whilst the majority of nests in a city will engage in whatever work or field of interest suits them.

Cities are thus governed by general cooperation and guided by the most potent manipulators within their society. Likewise, planetary affairs are guided in the same manner. It is simply not possible for an enemy to gain control of a Hiver world by capturing the seat of government, because there is none. However, it might be possible to launch a 'decapitation strike' to take out the key Manipulators behind a given policy – if they can be identified.

The Hiver economy is likewise confusing to outsiders. Hivers are not materialistic as such but do enjoy a comfortable lifestyle and thus tend to acquire wealth to pay for it. Each individual had a balance with their nest, which transfers if they move from one nest to another. There seems to be no formal regulation of the amounts a Hiver can draw from their nest – it is possible to go hugely into negative balance when funding a project or manipulation and it is not clear if a request is ever refused. Items bought with this balance belong to the Hiver, not the nest, but can be sold back at a reduced price when they are no longer needed.

It takes time for the transfer of balance to catch up with a Hiver moving between nests and there are tales of Hivers who moved repeatedly to stay ahead of increasing debt. In some cases these stories are cautionary, reminding the hearer that one day they may not be able to obtain a comfortable standard of living if they push too far. Other cases laud the Hiver as a clever Manipulator, especially if the accumulated debt was dodged in some manner or used to fund a grand project. Most Hivers seem to self-regulate out of long-term self-interest.

Each nest has a focus, which may or may not be a field of economic endeavour. Nests draw on credit from others in the same manner as individuals, repaying what they owe in whatever manner they can or sometimes deflecting the debt onto another nest. The system appears to be chaotic and prone to abuse, at least to outsiders, and the mechanism by which all this activity translates into a thriving world economy is baffling to non-Hivers.

One of the specialist nest types is known as an Embassy. Embassies exist to ensure a regular and steady movement of genetic material and ideas between Hiver worlds and cities. Embassies are required to stand apart from local politics and are consulted on many legal matters. It is not uncommon for members of an Embassy nest to travel extensively and to consider themselves members of all Embassies rather than just their home one. One of the key functions of this system is to ensure there is a single 'Hiver culture' on all worlds of the Federation.

Hivers have a strong natural curiosity about everything but generally a Hiver will be more interested in some fields than others. These may or may not be connected in a logical fashion. One Hiver might be fascinated by a narrow branch of mathematics; another may be equally interested in astrophysics, the interactions between invasive and native species, and the history of decorative basket-weaving. These interests may be pursued solo, but many Hivers join one or more Topical Clubs which align with their preferences.

Topical Clubs vary considerably. Some are open to anyone whilst many accept members by recommendation or invitation. Focus can be broad or narrow. Topical Clubs provide education within their fields of interest and conduct research or maintain definitive archives on the subject. Most are transitory, although often quite long-lasting, but a few have become a permanent part of Hiver society. Chief among these are the Manipulations Club of Guaran and the Legal Club of Glea.

There are other Manipulations Clubs but the Guaran one is the original and most influential. Along with teaching Hivers how to manipulate others the club maintains detailed records of what was done and how for all major and many minor manipulations of society. The Manipulations Club of Guaran also serves as an indicator of Manipulator status. A Hiver can attain this status by other means but if the Manipulations Club acknowledges an individual as a Manipulator this will be almost universally accepted by others.

The Legal Club of Glea serves a similar function for law and those who practice it. Its archives of legal precedent are considered the baseline for all case law in the Federation and members are charged with ensuring uniformity of law and enforcement throughout Hiver territory.

CHAPTER-TWENTY SEVEN

MILITARY AND NAVY

The Hive Federation uses the word 'navy' differently to most other polities. It is neither a wholly military formation nor a wholly starfaring one. All ships of all types owned and operated by the Hive Federation are part of its navy and all ground forces serving the Federation as a whole – as opposed to planetary defence forces – are controlled by the navy.

Similarly, the command structure of a Hiver ship is looser than that of most other races. Few ships are wholly crewed by Hivers. Those that are can see frequent changes of command, as most outsiders would perceive it, but in a crew that has served together for any length of time a natural order begins to prevail. The most dominant Hiver will either be recognisably in charge or have established de facto control over the ship even if someone else is deluded into thinking they are the 'captain'.

Most ships have a non-Hiver crew with only one or two Hivers aboard as crewmembers. Others may be carried as passengers and will naturally try to interfere when it suits them but the habit of cooperation will generally keep non-crew from attempting to meddle too much in the affairs of those who know what they are doing. Thus Federation ships often appear to have a harmonious crew of non-Hivers with a Hiver 'captain' and possibly other Hivers in senior positions. Some ships do not have a Hiver in charge at all and will tend to have a more formal rank structure.

Although the positions of captain and officers do not exist as such, there is a chain of command within the crew and guidance about whose instructions are to be followed. A Hiver that wanted to get control of a ship or its mission would have to subvert this, which can be difficult. It is generally simpler just to manipulate the commanding Hiver and direct the vessel's actions through it.

Despite these rather loose command and control arrangements, Hive Federation ships are generally efficiently run. The crew are specialists who know their jobs and a vessel will usually have a crew leader who takes the role of executive officer in all but name. The Hiver in charge indicates its general wishes, which might be the destruction of a hostile vessel or a simple docking manoeuvre and the crew gets the job done efficiently.

The Hive Federation has no equivalent to the highly organised sector and subsector fleets of the Imperium. Instead it is divided into administrative regions that receive an ever-changing allocation of starships. The activities of individual manipulators can alter the distribution of ships considerably, although some regions are deemed sufficiently important that it would take a galaxy-class manipulation to strip them of heavy ships. The border with the Two Thousand Worlds is one such region.

When it becomes apparent a naval task must be carried out, a commander is chosen and ships are assigned. Whether the Hiver in command gets itself appointed or is actually chosen for its capabilities is subject to the usual internal politics of the Hive Federation. Likewise, the allocation of ships is influenced by more than just the needs of the task at hand. The commanding Hiver will not be an 'admiral' in the usual sense but is typically a Manipulator with a grasp of many topics, advised perhaps by specialists. Thus a naval force is usually put together from what is available and can be obtained by its leader and is an instrument of policy rather than a pure combat force. This is of course true elsewhere but nowhere more so than when a fleet is wielded by a master Manipulator.

Hiver warships favour long-range weapons such as particle accelerators and missile systems, and tend to be well protected even if they are not combat vessels. Indeed, the Federation navy has far more paramilitary ships than purely military ones. These are mostly multirole vessels with light armament for their tonnage, capable of swapping between patrol and policing work to transport or specialist tasks with minimal effort. Such ships are inadequate for a major conflict but entirely capable of dealing with minor security threats.

Ships are typically constructed with the bridge and control spaces deep in the heart of the vessel and are expected to accommodate any race that is part of the Hive Federation. As a result, controls are generic or have repeated sections for differently shaped operators.

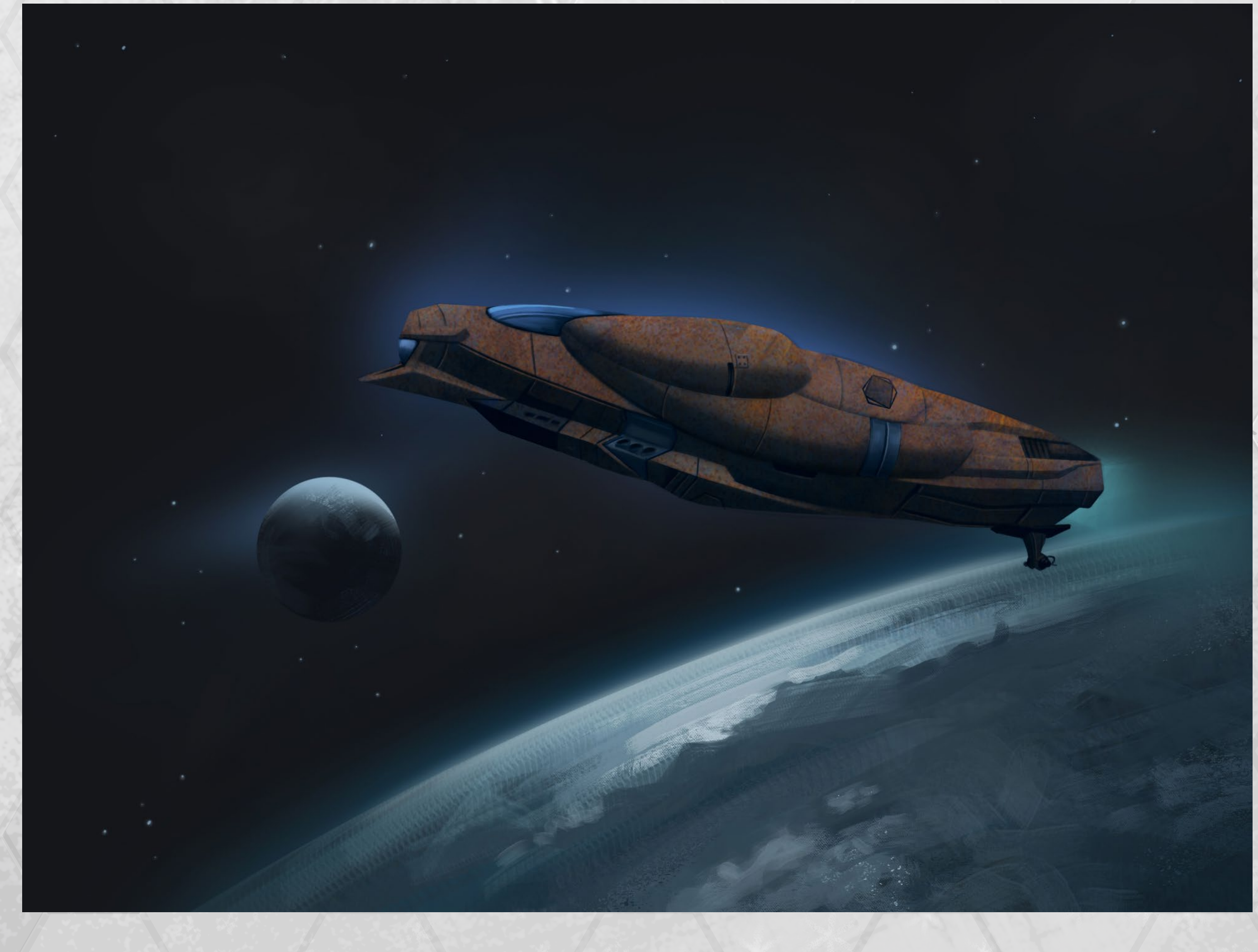
This takes up extra space and can be expensive, and sometimes makes Hiver ships rather easy to steal. There are so many alternate inputs and workarounds that a semi-competent hacker can bypass security without undue difficulty.

Vessels used by the navy are typically constructed at TL13–15, although there are rumours of exotic technologies kept hidden where no outsiders can see them. Ships built for the use of member worlds or private users vary considerably in technological sophistication, with little standardisation beyond a generally preferred design philosophy. Similarly, the defensive forces of member worlds vary considerably but the ground forces of the navy are more uniformly equipped.

The majority of non-specialist ground troops are Ithklur, who are adept at and seem to relish combat. Ground forces have no standard organisation above the squad level; forces are put together as needed and demobilised afterward. In practice, a ground force deployment will tend to parallel the formal units used by other cultures in terms of general size and composition but each force is unique and transitory.

Ground forces favour gauss weapons for infantry, which is the primary fighting arm. Most operations are directly from starships or aboard installations, making heavy vehicles unnecessary much of the time. Light, fast grav vehicles are used for direct support, particularly during urban fighting when they are accompanied by grav troop carriers. These are geared more to vertical than horizontal operations; it is generally easier to advance on the ground than to fight up a tall building.

Hivers very rarely accompany front-line troops but may be found manning artillery weapons in the rear of a combat zone. Artillery vehicles are usually heavily equipped with decoys, missile defences and short-range aerospace defence weapons. This over-emphasis on defensive equipment aboard vehicles that are unlikely to be attacked is typical of Hiver mindset. They are quite happy for lightly equipped Ithklur to go rampaging among the buildings of an enemy city so long as the Hiver leaders can sit well out of harm's way in a mobile bunker.



CHAPTER-TWENTY EIGHT

COMMERCE AND EXPLORATION

Some commercial activity is carried out privately, aboard ships owned by nests specialising in this area. More commonly, vessels of the Hive Federation navy are used to carry goods between member worlds. Exactly how any given ship comes to be undertaking a particular task depends on many factors but it is rarely a simple financial transaction. More commonly, manipulation and bargaining results in a vessel being sort-of-chartered for a particular run or ensures that space is available for passengers and cargo to be shipped.

Commercial spacing is nightmarishly complicated in the Federation as a result but this is to the liking of those who can thrive in such an environment. Those confused and baffled by all the possible deals that could be in place fall by the wayside; those who impose order on a small segment of the chaos will become rich. For the merchant who wants 60 tons of agricultural machinery shipping from one world to another or the Traveller seeking passage the situation is fluid but less complex. Ticket or freighting prices do suddenly fluctuate but the market will only stand so much variation and tends to self-regulate most of the time.

To simulate this rather chaotic environment, roll 2D of different colours when someone wants to buy passage or freight space. One dice represents +5% to the price per point, the other –5% per point. This gives a base cost of +/– 25%. The price will persist for D3 days before being redetermined. If the Traveller does not want to wait for a good price they can delve deeper, perhaps finding and contacting ship operators who will make a better bargain or undertaking a Hiver-style manipulation to get passage for less. This can spawn adventures and lead to useful contacts but is time-consuming. That is just another reality of the Federation – those with the talent to modify the situation get what they want quickly; everyone else just has to wait and hope they will get lucky.

Brokerages and similar commercial institutions are also exposed to considerable behind-the-scenes interference. This is the case everywhere but is particularly rampant in the Federation. It is common for a paid-for cargo to be suddenly unavailable and a solid deal to collapse without warning. Those who deal fairly and only on the surface are likely to lose out – to stand a chance it is necessary to play the game and join the scramble.

The usual deals and auctions are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Often the price and fate of cargo is sealed long before it enters port. Relationships carefully cultivated result in some cargoes always going to certain dealers at a steep discount even if there is a bigger fee on offer and many items are never publicly offered for sale. Much depends on who you know and what you can get them to do for you. This applies at all stages in the chain. A buyer expecting cargo is disappointed when it is bought out after a deal was made but gets the dock crew to divert it back to its original destination by way of clever manipulation. In other cultures this would all be highly criminal but in the Hive Federation it is simply how business is conducted.

The Federation has a border with the Two Thousand Worlds to coreward and the Solomani Confederation for part of its spinward extent but there are no major states in other directions. Exploration has been conducted for centuries, although rarely with much vigour. The Hivers are not forthcoming with data on what they have encountered and of course any information they do provide must be viewed with suspicion.

Most exploration is carried out over relatively short distances by the same multipurpose ships used for patrol work and commercial haulage. Some longer-range vessels do exist and are known to have made extremely long voyages out to trailing and rimward. It is likely there are scattered Federation colonies far beyond the known borders. Some of these may even be at the hub of a mini-federation of their own. However, most of the time the term ‘exploration’ refers to survey missions sent to obtain further information about worlds that have been at least cursorily charted for centuries or expeditions to gather intelligence.

Hiver ships routinely venture out from the Federation’s borders to maintain up-to-date information on worlds that might become a useful market or a threat. There are also scientific missions undertaking various forms of research. These missions tend to blur into one another as the agenda of the crew is shifted by influential members, so a mission to determine if a world might become a threat could be derailed into study of an interesting stellar phenomenon for a time, eventually returning with data on economic conditions on several worlds and a claim that there was an emerging threat that has been cleverly manipulated into harmlessness.

CHAPTER-TWENTY NINE

THE HIVE FEDERATION

The Hive Federation expanded out from the world of Guaran, in the Ricenden sector. Initially confined to a small area around Guaran, the Hivers assimilated all sentient races in this area, repeating the process when improvements in jump drive technology permitted them to move beyond their immediate surroundings. Expansion to coreward was curtailed by an encounter with the K'kree, leading to a major war and the eventual establishment of a firm border.

Although the spinward and trailing frontiers of the Hive Federation were more or less open, expansion was directed mainly in a spinward-rimward direction. This was largely due to astrographic realities and political likelihoods. To trailing of the coreward part of the Federation was an area of open space which was likely to be targeted for K'kree expansion. The Federation pushed out in this direction sufficiently to create a sector-wide zone between the border and the old worlds of the Hivers but eventually moved in the opposite direction.

Regions of the Hive Federation do not correspond to neat sector boundaries in most cases. The Federation as a whole is of irregular shape, with an inner region considered to be the Ricenden, Centrax, Wrenton and about half of Extolian sectors. Coreward of this is the region known as the Coreward Border District and immediately to trailing of Ricenden is the Blaskon Region of Interest. Rimward of the Region of Interest is the Trailing Bulge.

The spinward-rimward segment of the Hive Federation is considered to consist of two regions. The Hive Young Worlds represent more recently annexed systems across the rimward boundary of the Federation, whilst the spinward-coreward border zone runs 'round the corner' from Spica up into the spinward edge of Extolian, encompassing many systems outside the Federation proper.

THE CENTRAL ZONE

The exact extents of the Central Zone are open to some debate. It definitely lies within Ricenden, Centrax, Wrenton and Extolian but does not cover the entirety of any of them. The Central Zone is sometimes referred to as the 'Federation Old Worlds' and a variety of other titles, some of which are specific to parts of the zone.

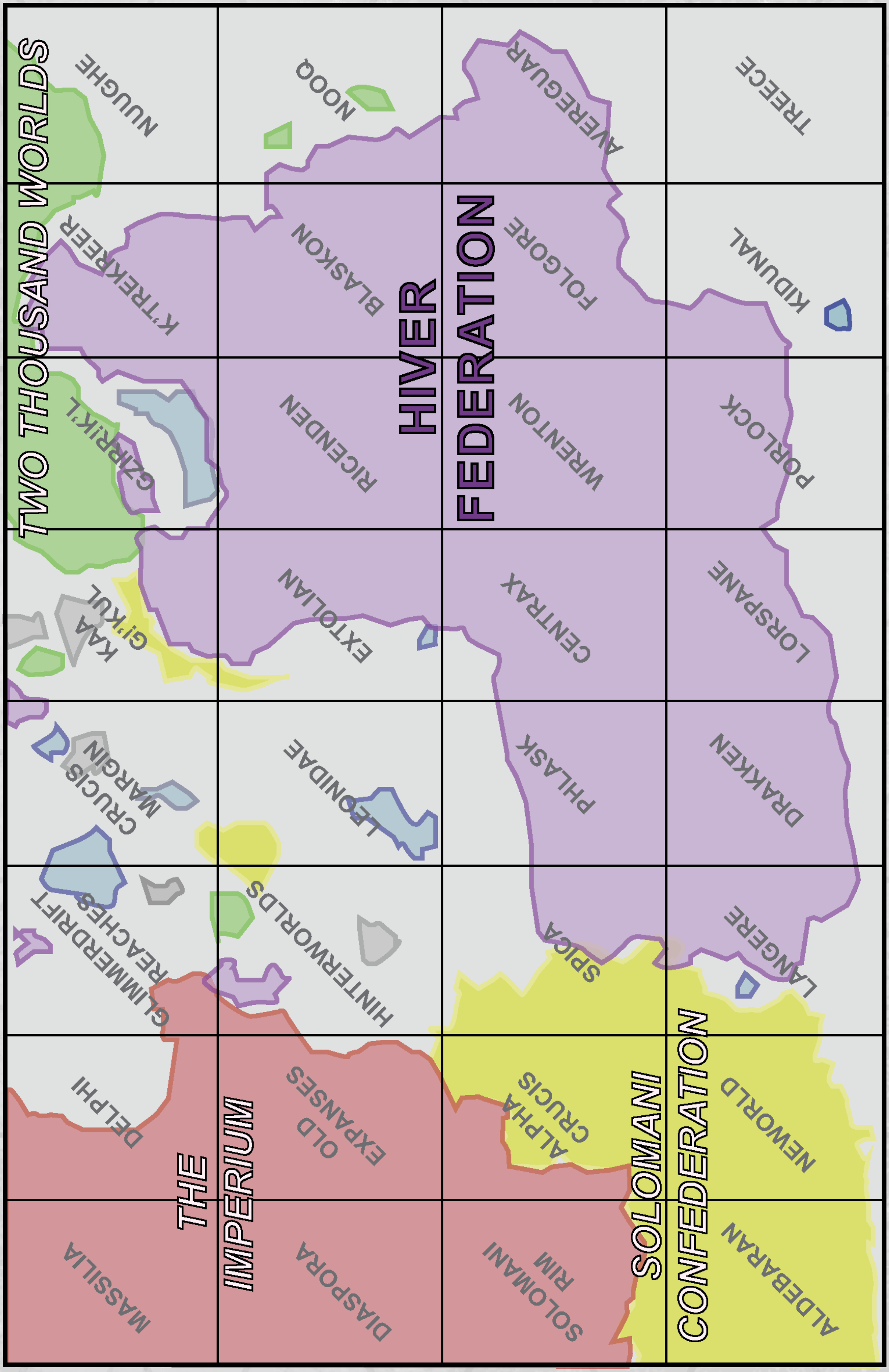
The Central Zone is thoroughly 'tamed', with unrest virtually unknown. Indeed, this is the measure used by many to delineate the extent of the zone – worlds that have required significant correction in the past few centuries are considered to lie outside it. 'Correction' in this case typically refers to major Manipulations, sometimes backed by the threat of military intervention. Actual naval or ground operations are exceedingly rare in the Hive Federation.

The Central Zone is characterised by vigorous and complex economic activity and an unusually settled political situation. Despite the cross-cutting agendas of powerful Hivers and Topical Clubs, stability reigns in the region. It is widely theorised that there is some powerful force at work creating this environment, perhaps a Central Zone Stability Club or a similar association of Manipulators working to create circumstances best suited to economic and industrial activity.

There are military and naval bases in the region but these are under-used for the most part. Hive Federation naval installations always cater to more than just military ships and those in the Central Zone take this to an extreme. Most have only a handful of major combat assets and even in-system defence forces are light. Instead they support large freighters – or rather, vessels currently operating in a commercial role. Those same ships might be pressed into service as warfighting assets if absolutely necessary but arguably the whole point of the Hive Federation is ensuring this does not happen.

THE COREWARD BORDER DISTRICT

The coreward border of the Hive Federation runs through the Kaa G!kul, Gzirr!k'l and K'trekreer sectors, along with a small section of Ricenden. For much of its length the border is separated from K'kree space by a narrow strip of neutral space. This area tends to see considerable activity by both Hiver and K'kree vessels, monitoring neutral systems and attempting to gain advantage or reduce the influence of the other power.


TREECE
KIDUNAL
PORLOCK
LORSPANE
DRAKKEN
LANGERE
NEWORLD
ALDEBARAN
AVEREGUAR
FOLGORE
WRENTON
CENTRAX
PHLASK
SPICA
ALPHA CRUCIS
SOLOMANI RIM
NOOQ
BLASKON
RICENDEN
EXTOLIAN
LEONIDAE
HINTERWORLDS
OLD EXPANSES
DIASPORA
NUUGHE
K'TREKREER
GZIRR'K'L
KAA G!'KUL
CRUCIS MARGIN
GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES
DELPHI
MASSILIA
TWO THOUSAND WORLDS
HIVER FEDERATION
THE IMPERIUM
SOLOMANI CONFEDERATION

The K'kree approach to the neutral area is to ignore it most of the time, with the occasional large-scale military expedition 'thundering' through multiple systems to demonstrate the military power of the Two Thousand Worlds. Intimidation and direct threats are the usual diplomatic tools of the K'kree, directed at both neutral worlds and the Hive Federation. The Hivers are, predictably, more subtle. They trade and offer assistance where appropriate, all the while quietly spreading rumours of K'kree oppression and atrocities. These need not be embellished; indeed, Hiver diplomats often downplay the savagery of the K'kree towards their enemies. The aim is to harden local attitudes against the Two Thousand Worlds rather than frightening local governments into obedience to the K'kree.

The primary buffer between the Hive Federation and the K'kree is the Krotan Primacy. The Krotan are a non-humanoid biped race who possess a suspiciously high level of technology. Their advancement from an early-spacefaring culture when first contacted by the Hivers into a high-technology power occurred in an impressively short time and was accompanied by warm relations with the Hive Federation. It is widely supposed that the Krotan were manipulated good and hard by the Hivers to create a buffer state, although they were always predisposed to be unreceptive to K'kree overtures.

The Krotan are omnivores and therefore targets for extermination or enforced vegetarianism when the K'kree get around to dealing with them. The only way to avoid this was to become a hard target but at the same time avoid antagonising the Two Thousand Worlds. It is known for certain that Hivers played a part in Krotan/K'kree diplomacy, although the exact terms of any agreements made are unknown. Today, the Krotan are important trading partners for the Federation, with ships crossing back and forth between the two on a regular basis. They appear content with the territory they now control and spend a high proportion of their economic output on ensuring any attempt at conquest is too costly to contemplate.

Hiver/K'kree contact is limited in the region coreward of Ricenden, although long-range diplomatic missions do cross the intervening space. Elsewhere in the coreward part of the Federation, borders lie closer and there is some direct trade. Kaa G!kul and K'trekreer are the most heavily militarised part of the entire Federation, although this is, as always, relative. There are few standing forces of warships but the resources allocated to these sectors could put together a potent defensive force in a short time.

Some systems are sufficiently heavily defended to be considered 'fortress worlds' but their locations are haphazard by the standards of more strategically minded races. Member worlds normally pay for their own in-system defences and the funds required to properly fortify a system are beyond the means of most. Those that have received powerful defences have generally benefited from intervention by a Hiver Manipulator who saw some benefit to fortifying that particular world. Thus the pattern of defences owes more to the desires of individuals to protect their homes or interests than to grand strategy.

THE BLASKON REGION OF INTEREST

The Blaskon Region of Interest contains systems in the Blaskon and Nooq sectors plus the coreward ends of Folgore and Averguar. This region is less 'pacified' than the Central Zone and occasionally sees some unrest on member worlds. The spinward segments of the Region of Interest were settled early in the expansion of the Hive Federation, with larger colonisation and annexation taking place at a slower pace.

Hiver ships routinely cross the border, headed out to trailing into the neutral systems. As usual, activity in the region is haphazard and subject to the whims of individuals but there is an underlying theme to most of the endeavours taking place along and outside the federation's borders. Survey ships look for resources in unclaimed systems and follow-up missions exploit them in an aggressive manner but where a native race holds sway over a star system a much gentler approach is taken.

This is not altruism. Indeed, it is part of the same plan. Systems that might someday be claimed by the Two Thousand Worlds are stripped of their readily accessible resources, whilst any race or society that might resist K'kree expansion is 'hardened' by providing technological uplift and guidance. The Federation has many friends in this region; friends who do not know they are merely a buffer zone and speed-bump to K'kree expansion. If conflict erupts between a neutral race and the Two Thousand Worlds it is unlikely the Hive Federation will go to war to protect it.

Encounters with large Hiver ships are not uncommon in this region, on both sides of the border. Most are engaged in commercial activity but well enough armed to deal with a modest threat. There are few naval forces as such, for the simple reason that ships that could be making money are wasted hanging around a naval base. It would take some time to concentrate a naval force in the event of serious trouble but ships are already in the region. It is unclear how many there are at any given time, which serves the Hivers' interests.

THE TRAILING BULGE

The Trailing Bulge lies in the mid and rimward parts of Folgore and Averguar. Expansion in a trailing-rimward direction is impeded by an area of low stellar density – not quite a rift – known as the Kolir-Kidunal Sparsity. It is not difficult to cross for a high-jump ship and is a barrier mainly to economic activity. Exploration ships and adventurous long-range traders cross the Sparsity on an intermittent basis but there is little incentive to try to push the border across to the other side.

The Sparsity provides a natural frontier to trailing-rimward and expansion around the coreward end is not desirable. It is widely assumed that the Two Thousand Worlds will eventually push in this direction, so long-term strategy is aimed at guiding their movement around the far side of the Sparsity. By making the Nooq sector unattractive – denuded of easily accessible resources and populated by resilient neutral races – the Hive Federation hopes to subtly deflect any surge of K'kree expansion past the Kolir-Kidunal Sparsity in the hope that energy will be expended elsewhere. There are rumours of long-term plans to make the region a quagmire for the K'kree if they invade or start annexing worlds, with resistance movements and subversive elements primed to begin their activities as soon as the first K'kree warriors arrive.

At present the Bulge is still something of a frontier, with a mix of developed and neglected worlds. Its protected location makes it a prime candidate for development into an economic heartland but this is proceeding in fits and starts, as always beholden to the plans and ambitions of influential Hiver Manipulators. Other than the systems bordering the Sparsity, the Bulge is very much an 'internal' region of the Federation where ships on naval missions are rarely encountered. Heavily armed vessels are still not uncommon but they will usually be engaged in non-military missions.

THE SPINWARD-COREWARD BORDER ZONE

The Spinward-Coreward Border Zone is subdivided into the Spica Flank, consisting of parts of Spica and Phlask, and the Tryylin Watch. The latter is named for the Ithklur homeworld and semi-officially includes many worlds in the Extolian and Leonidae sectors that lie outside the borders of the Federation. Some systems in the Hinterworlds are also places of interest to those who direct the affairs of the Tryylin Watch, though as always interest waxes and wanes depending on who is pushing what agenda.

Hive Federation ships are common in the Watch, many of them making the long reach to the Old Expanses in order to trade with the Imperium. A chain of friendly worlds and safe ports is desirable to secure this lucrative trade route and considerable effort is expended on ensuring the support of local governments. Federation ships will sometimes land ground forces to clear up a trouble spot or to 'correct' a government that is acting against the interests of the Federation but always 'to help local allies' or 'to provide assistance in this difficult time'. The Federation's policies are at times positively aggressive in the region and some wonder if a better name for the Watch might be 'The Ithklur Playground'. It seems unlikely that the Federation's ground-pounders are pulling the strings, however.

The Spica Flank also contains numerous systems outside the Federation, to coreward of the border. This region is less important to long-term strategic aims and sees few interventions. Trade ships are common, however, and occasionally a world becomes a client of the Federation. Joining as a full member is a more complex business, since a mixed population of many Federation races is considered necessary to fulfilling all governmental tasks efficiently. Many non-mixed populations wonder why they could not simply continue running their local affairs as before and fear being manipulated into a single niche. This would make a given population more useful to the Federation as a whole but also bring to an end any dreams of greatness.

From the moment a world melds into the Federation its own history essentially stops and most independent worlds are unreceptive to this even if the benefits of membership are considerable. Thus the border in this region remains stable. Those that do not wish to be dissolved in the federation often receive support from the Solomani Confederation, whether for political reasons or out of respect for unique cultures.

The spinward part of the Spica Flank has a direct border with the Solomani Confederation. Tensions rise intermittently but for the most part a wary respect exists. Both powers maintain significant naval forces near the border, although the Federation's ships are often co-opted for economic or other missions. Most trade is conducted between hubs located just across the border from one another, with goods trans-shipped from there, but longer-range cruises do range far and wide within Solomani and Hiver territory.

THE HIVE YOUNG WORLDS

The Hive Young Worlds region today encompasses the coreward ends of the Langere, Drakken, Lorspane and Porlock sectors. The term was originally applied to a region close to the coreward end of these sectors and in those immediately coreward of them, but as the worlds closer to the centre of the Federation matured they ceased to be considered 'young'. Thus the 'young worlds' region has been moving slowly rimward since the early 400s, around the time the capital of the Federation was moved to Glea.

The Young Worlds region contains a mix of developed and backwater systems, where occasional flurries of activity see the border pushed rimward a little. Most of the time the pace of development and expansion is rather sedate, however, as the Hive Federation takes a long view towards these things. Expansion is also curtailed by astrography. Langere is rather sparse, with a few mains and beyond it stellar density drops off quickly. This creates a convenient barrier between the Federation's spinward-rimward flank and any expansion rimward by the Solomani Confederation. Missions from both cross the sparse region but this is uncommon.

The path to expansion is much more open rimward of the Drakken sector. There are several large and promising mains which have been explored by Hiver traders. Some worlds in this region are known to have been 'worked over' by Hive manipulators in order to secure trade routes or safe ports for explorers. If the Federation continues to expand, it will be in this direction.

The centre of the Lorspane sector is dominated by the Lorspane drift, a region of extremely high stellar density whose origins are currently unknown. It is notable that the border of the Federation lies outside the drift. It is not claimed and there do not seem to be any member worlds (or potential member worlds) within it. The reasons for this are probably known to only a few interested Manipulators, although speculation is rife outside the Federation.

The Porlock sector offers plenty of opportunities to expand rimward and initiatives occasionally make progress in that direction. In recently years there has been considerable exploration activity out of Porlock, directed rimward and trailing-rimward, and there are rumours of large colony expeditions heading out of Hiver space. This may be an exaggeration but rumours seem to agree that these expeditions contain populations from multiple member worlds, suggesting the creation of colonies rather than trading posts or exploration bases. The reason for this sudden wave of colonisation remains unclear.

Wacky Hiver Theories: Dreamers and the Exodus

Hivers are believed to have no potential for psionic powers, although they are as susceptible as anyone else to their use. There are, however, tales of Hiver 'dreamers' who may be psionic receptors. If this is true, they are extremely rare – one in millions at most. Dreamers, according to the theory at least, passively receive thoughts and images from all minds around them as a confusing jumble that is processed by the Hiver's subconscious. Sooner or later the result intrudes into the Hiver's consciousness as a sort of waking dream, accompanied by seizure-like symptoms.

'Dreams' are said to be confused and oracular rather than informative and represent the Hiver's subconscious attempt to make sense of all those random thoughts and images. There is no indication that there is any sort of prescience or foretelling involved; in all probability the dream is a symptom of uncontrolled latent telepathy rather than any sort of useful gift. It is not known if any dreamer has ever had psionic training.

Those who believe this rather far-fetched tale often conflate it with the increased interest in exploration and possible colonisation in the rimward end of the Federation and leap to the conclusion that Something Bad Is Coming And The Hivers Know About It. Again, there is no evidence that any of this is true. Documents, allegedly of Hiver origin, occasionally make the rounds of the more dubious end of the newsfeeds. The most recent is a disturbing poem-like text detailing a dream alleged to have been experienced by a Hiver. 'I had a dream. A dream of fire' became a popular phrase among conspiracy fans after a fringe documentary channel ran a feature entitled 'What The Hivers Don't Want You To Know'. Interest has since waned but there are those who insist that 'something is coming' and that the Hivers are either behind it, running ahead of it, or both.

CHAPTER-TWENTY THIRTY

HIVER WORLDS

There are very few 'purely Hiver' worlds within the Federation. Almost all worlds inhabited by Hivers have at least some other races present and most are a cosmopolitan mix of many species. The definition of a Hiver world is thus not so much whether it is inhabited by Hivers as whether it has a 'Hiver' or 'Hive Federation' culture. Many worlds within the Federation do not, although there are always influences. Those that do not tend to be homeworlds of a member race or cultural preserves for the most part, although there are worlds that have a different culture to the Federation norm for no readily discernible reason.

GUARAN

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Guaran is a small world with a standard atmosphere and about 50% ocean coverage. There are six major bodies of water and many smaller ones, dividing the world up into distinct regions. Guaran is the homeworld of the Hivers but is no longer the political centre of the Hive Federation. It does retain economic and political significance but whilst Hivers from far-off worlds come to visit the homeworld its draw is more academic than spiritual – Hivers go there because they want to see the old homeworld for themselves and to experience their evolutionary conditions but Guaran does not have the spiritual significance that Earth does for many humans.

Guaran is a model of how to balance technology and ecology. The large and small cities are all surrounded by wide belts of wilderness, which can be considered to fall into two general types. Maintained Wilderness areas are monitored and kept in optimal condition by a large body of specialist workers. Maintained Wilderness is completely wild, with dangerous predators and other hazards, but is kept from changing too much. Beyond the maintained zones are the 'true wilderness' areas where no such work is done. These areas may suffer damage from flooding or drought and are left to nature to mould as it will, whilst the maintained areas are quickly returned to an optimal state after any natural damage has occurred.

Hiver larvae fend for themselves in these wilderness areas for a year before joining a community. Most return to the nearest city but some manage to make epic journeys across hundreds of kilometres of true wilderness to reach small settlements or distant cities. Some Hivers are opposed to tracking larvae but there

are Topical Clubs on Guaran dedicated to learning more about the behaviour of their species' offspring. So far no universally accepted theory exists as to why (or how) some larvae manage to range so widely.

The cities themselves are clean and elegant in a functional way. Hiver nests within a city are usually small all-Hiver areas, with districts in between populated by a mix of races. Heavy goods typically move underground through tunnels, either by way of wide-gauge maglev railways or grav vehicles racing at terrifying speeds on automated delivery schedules. Little of this activity is seen at surface level and most industry is buried in the base of structures.

Typically, living areas are built on a horizontal and vertical grid, with light rail and ground-level roadway links between tall structures containing thousands or tens of thousands of homes, shops and minor businesses. Grav vehicle platforms give access to the higher levels from other structures, with grav elevators providing internal vertical movement. Dwelling structures tend to be self-contained with their own power and recycling facilities but are not quite arcologies as such.

Guaran is officially listed as an anarchic society with no laws and by the standards of non-Federation races this is arguably the case. Society is largely self-regulating by way of long precedent and a cooperative instinct, with most inhabitants following rules that have not needed to be codified for generations. To an outsider it can be bewildering that a population numbering in the hundreds of millions can get along without tearing itself apart, especially with so many races represented.

In fact, the vast majority of people on Guaran are peaceful and cooperative, and even those who have their own agendas tend not to engage in physical violence or obviously harmful actions. This is simply not the Hiver way. However, society has its leaders and its mavericks and vast numbers of people in between who just want to get on with whatever interests them today. The machinations of the more active segment of the population tend to cancel one another out in the grand scheme of things, although occasionally a major project surfaces and makes waves for a while.

One example of such a project remains a major tourist attraction on Guaran despite the sheer mundanity of its physical aspect. In the very distant past, a single Hiver decided that its home region would be better served by the creation of a major road and communication infrastructure. Getting multiple cities involved in this huge undertaking was not an easy task and has been acknowledged as the First Manipulation. Its extent is obvious to those who drive the roadways and tunnels that still follow the old routes, visiting cities built in previously inaccessible areas opened up by the new network. On one hand, this is just an impressive piece of infrastructure but to a Hiver it is a symbol of what one Hiver can do when it sets its mind to the task.

Few Hiver tourists visit Guaran without meeting representatives of the Manipulations Club of Guaran. The club maintains records of all the great Manipulations and evaluate petitions for new entries in its archives. It also trains manipulators, although non-Hivers who attend generally come away disappointed that they have learned no great secrets. The club's leaders maintain that this is the great secret; a true Manipulator knows nothing more than anyone else. It is what they do with that knowledge that sets them apart.

Guaran is almost entirely defenceless. It lies in the heart of the Hive Federation, with many parsecs of pacified worlds in all directions. There are no military garrisons and whilst the orbital starport has a few weapons scattered over its outer surface it could not withstand a determined attack. Nor could the armed ships likely to be in-system at any given time. Traffic volume is high and some ships present are well armed but there is no system defence command beyond what is necessary to coordinate customs and security vessels. There has never been any real need to defend Guaran; it is not really important to the Hive Federation and highly unlikely to ever be attacked. Indeed, if Guaran ever were to come under attack it would signify the complete failure of the Hive Federation to control its surroundings – and that is arguably its main reason for existing.

GLEA

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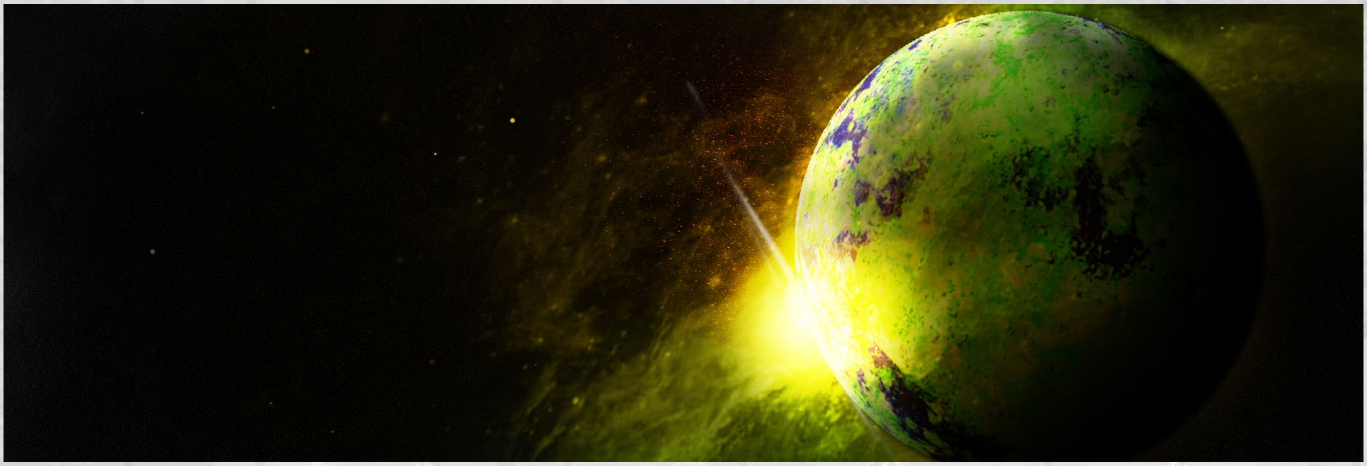
Glea is larger than Guaran but has otherwise similar conditions. It is a very welcoming world, with wildernesses suitable for Hiver larvae. As with Guaran, these are divided into maintained and true wilderness but there are greater differences on Glea. Maintained wildernesses are mostly populated by flora and fauna originating on Guaran, whereas truly wild areas are generally home to native life. Between the two are zones where native and introduced species mingle, creating an environment that has kept Hiver scientists interested for generations.

The cities of Glea are similar to those of Guaran but their settlement pattern reflects deliberate colonisation rather than expansion and cities were designed from the outset to be inhabited by a variety of races. The majority of cities are much the same as those found elsewhere; places of industry and economic activity, home to tens of thousands of Hive Federation citizens. Some, however, have a different character.



Glea is the capital of the Hive Federation, which is governed from a purpose-built city-complex. Rather than allow a single city to grow too large and perhaps begin damaging the vital wilderness area around it, the Federation created a group of cities within easy travel distance of one another. They are located in favourable locations, creating a rough ring and it is perhaps symbolic that there is no centre to the group. Each of the cities contains part of the Federation's administrative apparatus and none is elevated above the others… at least in theory.

The capital group has embassies from each of the member races, distributed apparently at random among the cities, as well as Topical Clubs dedicated to a variety of interests. Some are the equivalent of think-tanks or lobby groups, whilst others are concerned with specific aspects of the Federation's governance. The most famous of these is the Legal Club of Glea, which is the primary repository of law and custom throughout the Federation. Its members are frequently consulted on matters great and small, and offer solutions to complex negotiations with outside agencies.

Glea itself is recorded as being an anarchy by most databases. This has more to do with an inability to understand how Hiver government works than actual chaos, although to all appearances there is little structure to anything. In fact Glea is led rather than governed and leadership changes frequently depending on the actions of individuals. The supposedly equal cities rise to prominence and are eclipsed in turn as their master Manipulators push the federation as a whole in this direction or that.

Similarly, Glea is listed as having a law level of zero in most databases, yet it is home to one of the most prominent legal bodies in Charted Space. This is because 'law' has a different meaning in Hiver terms than elsewhere. There may be no formally written laws but there are centuries of precedent about actions that led to unpleasant consequences and thus are undesirable, or complex disputes resolved in a clever manner. The Legal Club of Glea does not sit in judgement and hand down penalties in the manner of an Imperial court; instead it advises on what should or should not be done and suggests (one way or another) solutions to problems. Sometimes a matter is brought to the club and sometime later the problem just sort of goes away without anyone having a clue what happened. On other occasions the Legal Club might straight-out declare that an action is likely to lead to very bad consequences and cannot be permitted. It has no formal power to enforce this but others are likely to decide to do so. The Legal Club of Glea also spends many happy hours poring over the treaties and contracts of other races, to a variety of purposes.

An observer unfamiliar with how the Hive Federation works might be puzzled – to say the least – by a visit to Glea. There is the usual enormous bureaucratic apparatus and the starport is busy with ships coming and going, yet nothing ever seems to be formally resolved or decided. There are no declarations of intent or ceremonies to close a matter. Everything is on the table, all of the time, and debates spring up and die down over matters long thought resolved. No orders or edicts come out of the capital cities, although apparently important Hivers come and go all the time. Yet things happen. The Hive Federation is orderly and prosperous. It undertakes great works and reins in the behaviour of ill-intentioned individuals.

An outsider might never comprehend how it all happens, since absolutely none of it is formal or overt. Hivers make decisions on Glea and they are implemented in the Federation; that much is known. How, when and why any given initiative began is usually a complete mystery and it is likely that even the most powerful Hiver Manipulators on Glea are often lost in the chaos. Glea is an anarchy indeed, in which no-one has the formal right to tell anyone what to do… but equally anyone can try to impose their will on the whole Hive Federation.

TIRING ANTES

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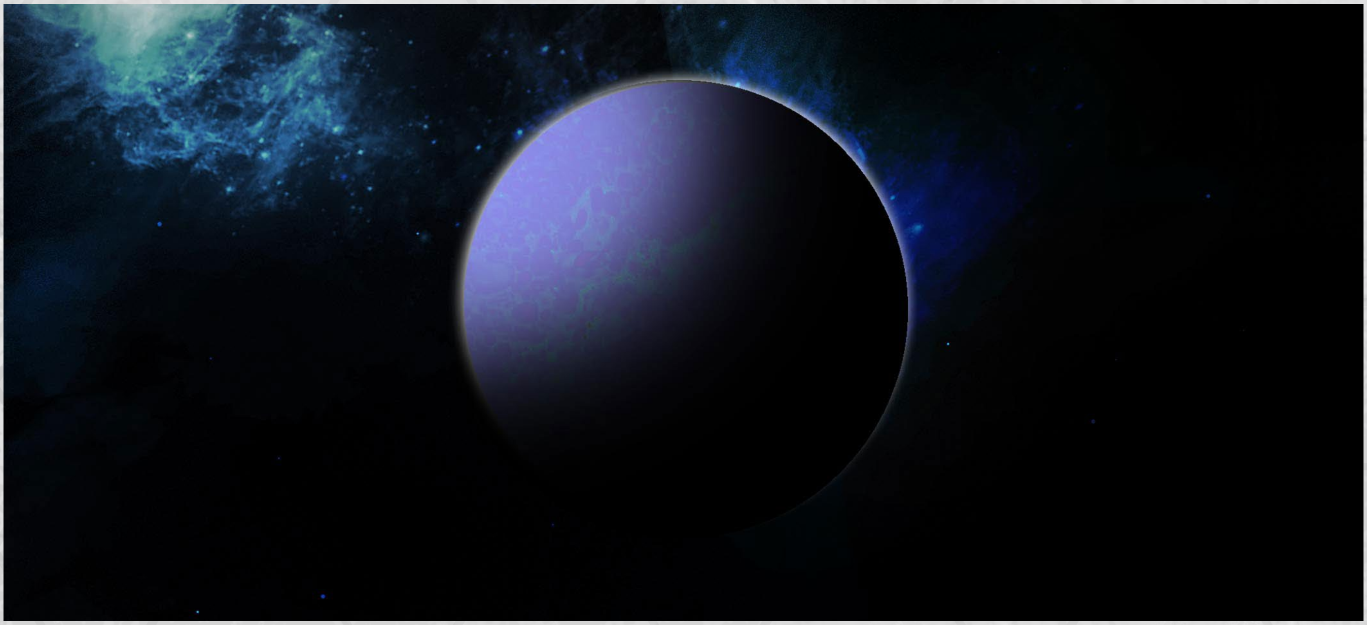
Tiring Antes lies close to the border with the Solomani Confederation. It is a large, wet world with a dense atmosphere and thoroughly disagreeable ecosystem. Wilderness areas must be carefully maintained and imported species protected, as the local wildlife is inimical both to these species and also Hiver larvae. Survival rates are very low, even with constant attention to maintaining a challenging but not-too-lethal environment. This is acceptable, since Tiring Antes is occupied for political and economic reasons rather than being a home.

The world's population of around 80,000 Hive Federation citizens includes a few nests of Hivers but is mostly made up of other races. Other than cementing a territorial claim the population is present only to support the naval and military bases in the system. As is common with the Hive Federation, these are different in character to the bases used by other powers.

The military base is a sprawling facility located on one of the world's few largish land masses. It is home to a large force of ground troops, most of them Ithklur, and also to an extensive maritime operations training facility. Where large facilities of this sort in other powers tend to focus on training and fielding high-level formations – brigades, divisions and corps – the base at Tiring Antes is geared more to deploying what might be called flexible-response forces. These vary in size and composition, and are typically set up to deal with a range of problems rather than being purely military forces. At the very least a negotiating team is included and often there are construction and mercantile assets. These demonstrate the carrot whilst the military force stands ready with the stick.

The naval base is likewise not a purely military facility. It is heavily fortified and acts as an orbital fortress to defend the mainworld. In-system defensive craft are mostly pure combat designs but most of the ships based out of the installation are multirole types suited to commerce and diplomacy as well as combat. This is how the Hive Federation projects power from its naval bases – they are more about creating circumstances in which conflict is unlikely than warfighting.

Tiring Antes is a regular port of entry for ships from the Solomani Confederation headed into the Hive Federation. Solomani naval vessels are also frequent visitors 'showing the flag' and occasionally conducting joint exercises. These rarely go very well, since the Hive Federation's way of operating is totally incompatible with the formal command structure of the Confederation Navy. It is also rumoured that the Hivers like to mess with the earnest Solomani visitors either to observe their reactions or undermine the reputation of officers who might someday lead an effective operation against the Hive Federation. It seems unlikely that the chaos that surrounds a typical attempt at joint exercises can be entirely due to amateurishness and misunderstandings.



UOUU

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Lying at the trailing edge of the Hive Federation, Uouu is a rockball world inhabited by mostly non-Hivers. The permanent population numbers around 700 workers at the small downport, although at any given time there may be several hundred more prospectors and small-scale miners on-planet. The Hiver population is limited to a single nest, which functions as a world government of sorts and the board of directors of a small mining corporation.

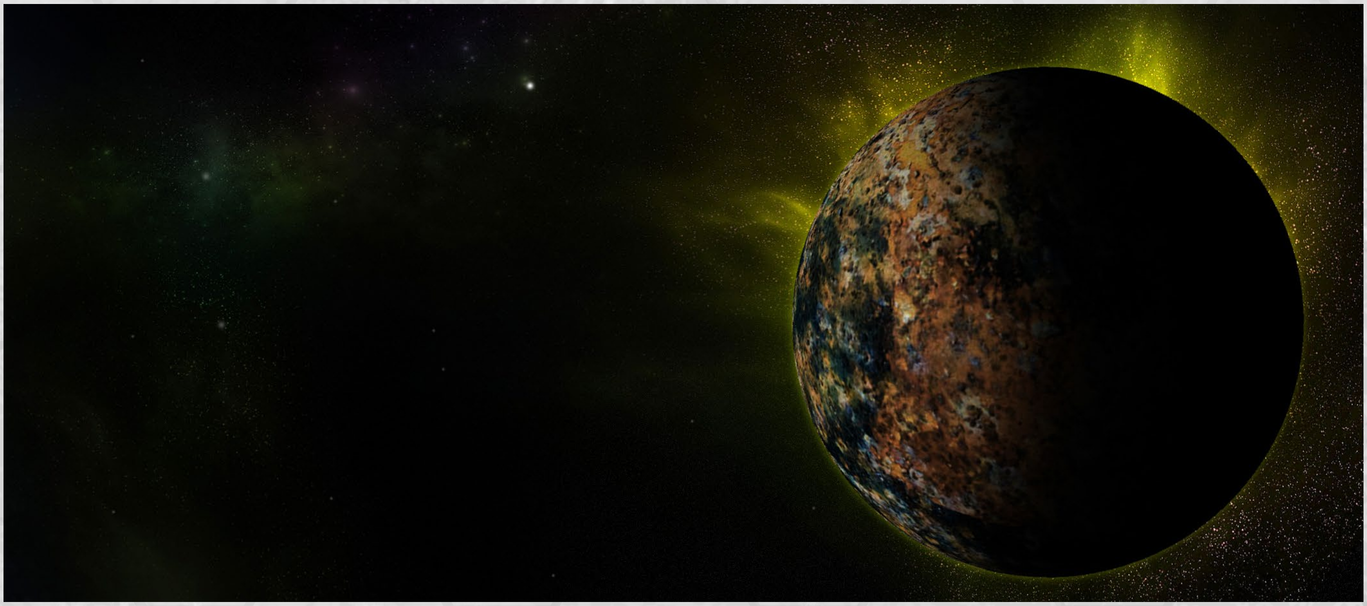
Uouu has a fair amount of mineral wealth, of which little has yet been tapped. This provides a modest income but with no industry to make use of it most is shipped offworld in a raw form. The downport is little more than an ore processing works and associated landing area, whilst the orbital port is far more extensive.

The highport does not 'belong' to the world government of Uouu but was built by the Hive Federation as part of an initiative to secure the border. Security, in this context, is provided by cross-border trade with the independent worlds to Trailing. In addition to establishing good relations with governments of inhabited worlds the constant flow of trade is an easy way to gather intelligence and act upon it with subtle manipulations. This has not always translated to complete tranquillity but in general this part of the trailing frontier is peaceful.

The sealed settlement of Uouu has some small biosphere areas but these are not suitable for the development of Hiver larvae. All larvae are killed as a matter of course. The Hiver community of Uouu ensures it continues to contribute to genetic diversity and receives a steady influx of new genetic material by sending representatives to other worlds on a regular basis. These 'handshake tours' are common on low-population worlds, which cannot maintain sufficient diversity within their own populace.

Uouu is also a designated Embassy Exchange Point. There are many of these, located at intervals throughout the Hive Federation. Vessels carrying parties from the Embassy meet at these points or drop off personnel to wait for the next ship to come along. Any Hiver changing vessels takes with it generic material from every world and vessel its previous ship encountered. When two large ships are in port at once there is a mass exchange of genetic material. This is as normal to Hivers as saying good morning whilst passing someone on the starport concourse but non-Hiver visitors are sometimes made uncomfortable by the notion that they are witnessing some kind of extremely genteel orgy.

As with many similar worlds, Uouu is not well defended. The highport has a few weapons but little point is seen in spending a lot of money on protection against a threat that can be as readily nullified by diplomacy. The people of Uouu themselves have little to do with such endeavours but are aware that the Federation as a whole is protecting them whilst they contribute to its economy in their own small way. This concept of individual worlds doing as they please within the framework of cooperation across the Hive Federation is a smaller version of Hiver society as a whole.



CHAPTER - THIRTY ONE

HIGH GUARD: HIVE FEDERATION

Hiver starships are generally similar in most ways to those used by other races. Smaller ships – and many large ones – tend to have a high degree of automation, allowing a lone Hiver or small crew to operate a vessel. A Hiver commanding a starship is less a captain in the conventional sense and more a central 'brain' that directs the vessel through a living crew or automated systems.

COMMAND CENTRES

The bridge of a Hiver ship tends to be larger than those used elsewhere. This is partly to allow duplication of controls such that different races can crew the ship and partly due to additional systems. A Hiver bridge contains a control area and a command area. The former is where crewmembers operate the ship's controls, whilst the command area is outfitted as the Hiver in command pleases. It may be an office, a living space or a small biosphere where the Hiver can enjoy the feeling of being in a natural environment. A retractable partition separates the command and control spaces, allowing the Hiver to either observe the crew or close itself off. This can lead to crewmembers wondering what the Hiver is plotting in there, which is sometimes useful in keeping the crew slightly uneasy.

The control space also contains gunnery control systems that might otherwise be distributed throughout the vessel and a set of heavy bulkheads to protect the whole command crew. The command and control space thus counts as having Armoured Bulkheads and in addition is provided with a separate life support and comfort system including freshers and a tiny galley. A command crew can survive in their armoured citadel for days or even weeks using its internal batteries, remaining properly fed and clean throughout. This is useful when a ship has been heavily damaged but also allows a Hiver to lock itself away from the crew for a few weeks if this seems necessary.

Hiver command and control systems are of necessity larger than their equivalents elsewhere. They are not usually found aboard small craft intended to be piloted by non-Hivers, although exceptions do exist.

Size of Ship	Size of Command and Control Centre
50 tons or less	8 tons
51–99 tons	16 tons
100–200 tons	25 tons
201–1000 tons	64 tons
2,000 tons or more	95 tons

Hiver command and control centres cost MCr1 per 100 tons of the ship they are installed in.

SHIP AUTOMATION

Larger Hive Federation ships typically carry a large crew made up of various member races. They may make use of some automation but it is in smaller vessels that it is most prevalent. Hiver automation goes beyond that offered by a Virtual Crew software suite. Systems are designed to be entirely machine-run and are often 'black boxed' with no external controls or access points. Whilst this makes life difficult for maintenance crews, if they are carried, it does suit Hiver mentality. A Hiver operating a small ship does not care all that much how the systems work, only that they do what it wants. This is not dissimilar to the attitude of many Hivers to other sophonts.

Hiver ship automation is normally installed in blocks. Power plant and manoeuvre drive are usually one block, jump drive, if fitted, is another. The bridge automation package carries out all astrogation, piloting and sensor tasks, along with handling routine communications. Weapons automation is normally localised, with only a command interface for the bridge. Thus a turret will be operated by its automation package, which is located in its base, with control from the command and control centre often restricted to little more than telling the automatic gunner it can fire at will.

Automated systems do not require a Virtual Crewmember suite; suitable software is already installed. There are two standard modes of operation.

Semi-Automated Mode requires some input from the command and control centre. The ship's operator can highlight a target and clear the weapon to engage, after which it will do so until told to stop or pre-set parameters are met. The weapon will make its own decisions about when to fire but is essentially carrying out a limited set of instructions and requires some supervision. Similarly, the piloting system will fly the ship between two points set by the operator, according to whatever parameters have been pre-set. This might be least-time, fuel efficiency or a set of waypoints, which must be passed with a given speed and heading.

Semi-automated mode requires a fair amount of oversight from the ship's operator. A semi-automated weapon will engage the target it is given but ignore everything else, unless it has been placed in point-defence mode in which case it will engage missiles and torpedoes automatically but according to a simplistic and possibly ineffective nearest-first fire plan. Semi-automated mode allows a small number of operators to run quite a large ship but is most effective when selecting pre-set routines. Going off-script can result in chaos unless the operator is experienced.

Fully-Automated Mode is intended for the use of untrained personnel. The ship's operator simply selects from a set of options and the vessel's automated systems do the rest. Options are simple but can be amended by the user. This will end in disaster unless the operator is skilled in the relevant field. For example, the default option for 'fly from this point to that point' is a least-time course with a margin of error built in, creating a transit that is predictable and around 20% less than optimal in terms of time taken. A skilled pilot can amend this to reduce the margin of error or build in a dogleg to get out of the common shipping lanes but someone who does not understand these concepts is unlikely to get exactly the result they want and may select options that result in a greatly slowed transit time or arriving quickly but too fast to enter orbit. There are warnings to prevent this but an unskilled person might think they are cleverly wringing the most out of the system by means of disabling them.

A ship in fully-automated mode can be sent off as a drone to operate independently, although this can go badly wrong if the user gives poor instructions. One other problem is that automated ships do not have enough crew to deal with crises or replace casualties, so full automation is normally reserved for personal transports and small craft. Larger vessels may use some automation to reduce crew requirements, especially in the case of vessels intended for freighting and the like but retain the capability to run with a full crew when necessary.

Operating an Automated Ship

Anyone who has completed the tutorials can operate an automated ship, after a fashion. The vessel can undertake only the simplest versions of common tasks – it can take off from a planet, jump to another then land at the starport but will do so in a relatively slow and entirely predictable manner, with large margins for safety and strict compliance with all procedures.

To be used by an unskilled person, a vessel must be operating in fully-automated mode and suffers DM-4 on all skill checks. However, it does not need to make checks for standard procedures such as docking or even plotting a jump. Instead it does everything about 20% slower than a standard crew would. Jump direction is not affected but setup times and safety margins are. A fully-automated ship that must use its weapons or attempt to evade incoming fire still suffers this DM-4, as its combat manoeuvres and firing patterns are predictable and often inefficient.

Someone with Tactics (naval) or Electronics (remote ops) can make use of semi-automated mode even if they do not understand the principals involved. For example, a pilot would understand the interplay of forces needed to get the ship into orbit with a particular velocity, whereas someone using a point-and-click interface can achieve the same result without really knowing how it happens. The pilot would be in a position to deal with anomalies and emergencies, whereas the point-and-click user has to hope the automatics can cope. Semi-automatic mode imposes DM-2 on all actions but the user can apply their Electronics (remote ops) or Tactics (naval) skill if they have one.

Software intended to assist crewmembers does not affect either mode, although it will apply if the automation is turned off and crewmembers take full control.

Auto-Plotted Jumps

For unknown reasons, automated jumps are prone to an increased risk of misjump. A jump plotted by the automatic systems without the involvement of a sentient astrogator is subject to the same DM-4 as all other fully automated actions. For this reason, if just one skilled crewmembers is carried it is usually an astrogator. A jump plotted in semi-automatic mode by someone without the Astrogator skill but with a basic understanding of the concepts involved suffers DM-2. It is thought that a machine will produce several apparently equal solutions to the same jump plot and cannot distinguish between them but a sentient mind somehow 'feels' which one is slightly better than the others. Even someone who is not a trained astrogator can do this to some extent and if one is available they can oversee the plot. Their Astrogator skill applies in this case and the DM-2 is not suffered.

Attempting to send a ship through jumpspace without people on board enormously increases the risk of misjump, for reasons unknown. In addition to the DM-4 for the autoplot, a vessel suffers an additional DM-4 if there are no conscious minds aboard. Low-berth passengers are by definition not conscious and experiments with highly intelligent but non-sentient minds have produced wildly differing results.

AUTOMATION PACKAGES

Automation packages come in two types; small-ship and component. An automation package normally controls one function, such as a single battery of laser turrets or the main power plant but applies to all supporting functions. Thus a piloting package will also operate the ship's in-system navigational sensors but not a long-range sensor package intended for astronomical observations of other star systems.

Full Automation: This package controls all functions of a non-starship (any vessel lacking a jump drive), including weapons if fitted. Full automation for a non-starship consumes 15% of the vessel's tonnage at a cost of MCr10 per 100 tons of hull. For a starship, full automation includes control of the jump drive and the ability to plot jumps. Full automation for a starship consumes 20% of the ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr12.5 per 100 tons of hull.

Critical Systems Automation: This package controls critical functions of the ship: piloting, astrogation, communications, life support, manoeuvre, power plant and jump drive for those vessels that have one. It communicates with port authorities and other vessels automatically in line with the operator's wishes and takes passengers where they want to go. It does not operate internal systems such as food preparation and general machinery. Critical Systems Automation consumes 12% of a ship's tonnage at a cost pf MCr8 per 100 tons of hull for non-starships and 15% of a ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr10 per 100 tons of hull for any vessel capable of jump.

General Systems Automation: This package controls non-critical systems for any starship or non-starship. These include communications and life support – overlapping with a critical systems package if one is fitted – along with general internal systems such as workshops, galleys and medical bays. For most users this package is all about comfort and convenience, enabling them to auto-fabricate components for a project when needed but for the most part just ensuring the galley produces the desired meal at the correct time. General Systems Automation consumes 5% of a ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr2 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Piloting: An Automated Piloting system conducts basic flight operations and can attempt to evade fire in an emergency. It will also deal with routine matters like liaising with port authority traffic controllers without having to bother the operator. Automated Piloting consumes 1% of a ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr5 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Piloting and Astrogation: An Automated Piloting and Astrogation system can use any sensors fitted to a ship over interstellar distances if which they are capable. It can search for nearby stars and gas giants in a system but is unlikely to be able to gather much data without a high-capability sensor system. The automation package consumes 1% of the ship's tonnage and costs MCr8 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Power Plant Operation: An Automated Power Plant Operation system replaces all crewmembers required to run the plant and can conduct very basic self-maintenance. This is limited to line flushing, self-cleaning and automated removal, and replacement of worn components from dedicated stocks. The system consumes 2.5% of the ship's tonnage and costs MCr5 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Manoeuvre Drive Operation: An Automated Manoeuvre Drive Operation system replaces all crewmembers needed to run the drive, but does not provide a means to pilot the ship. As with the power plant system it is capable of limited self-maintenance. The system consumes 2% of the ship's tonnage and costs MCr5 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Jump Drive Operation: An Automated Jump Drive Operation system replaces all crewmembers needed to run the drive but does not provide a means to plot a jump. As with the power plant system it is capable of limited self-maintenance. The system consumes 2% of the ship's tonnage and costs MCr8 per 100 tons of hull.

Integrated Engineering Automation: Probably the most common starship automation package, an Integrated Engineering Automation system replaces the entire engineering crew. Often the whole engineering area is 'black boxed' away from the part of the ship used by the operator. Systems are capable of limited self-maintenance but the lack of engineers is a severe problem in the event of a fault or damage. An IEAS consumes 5% of the ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr10 per 100 tons of hull.

Automated Weapon: An Automated Weapon system controls a single battery of weapons, which can be up to six turrets, four barbettes or a single bay. It conducts related sensor tasks and fires either at selected targets or according to a pre-set pattern. For example, a laser battery can be pre-set to fire at missiles if any are detected and at the largest hostile vessel if no missiles are incoming. It consumes 1% of the ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr1 per 100 tons of hull.

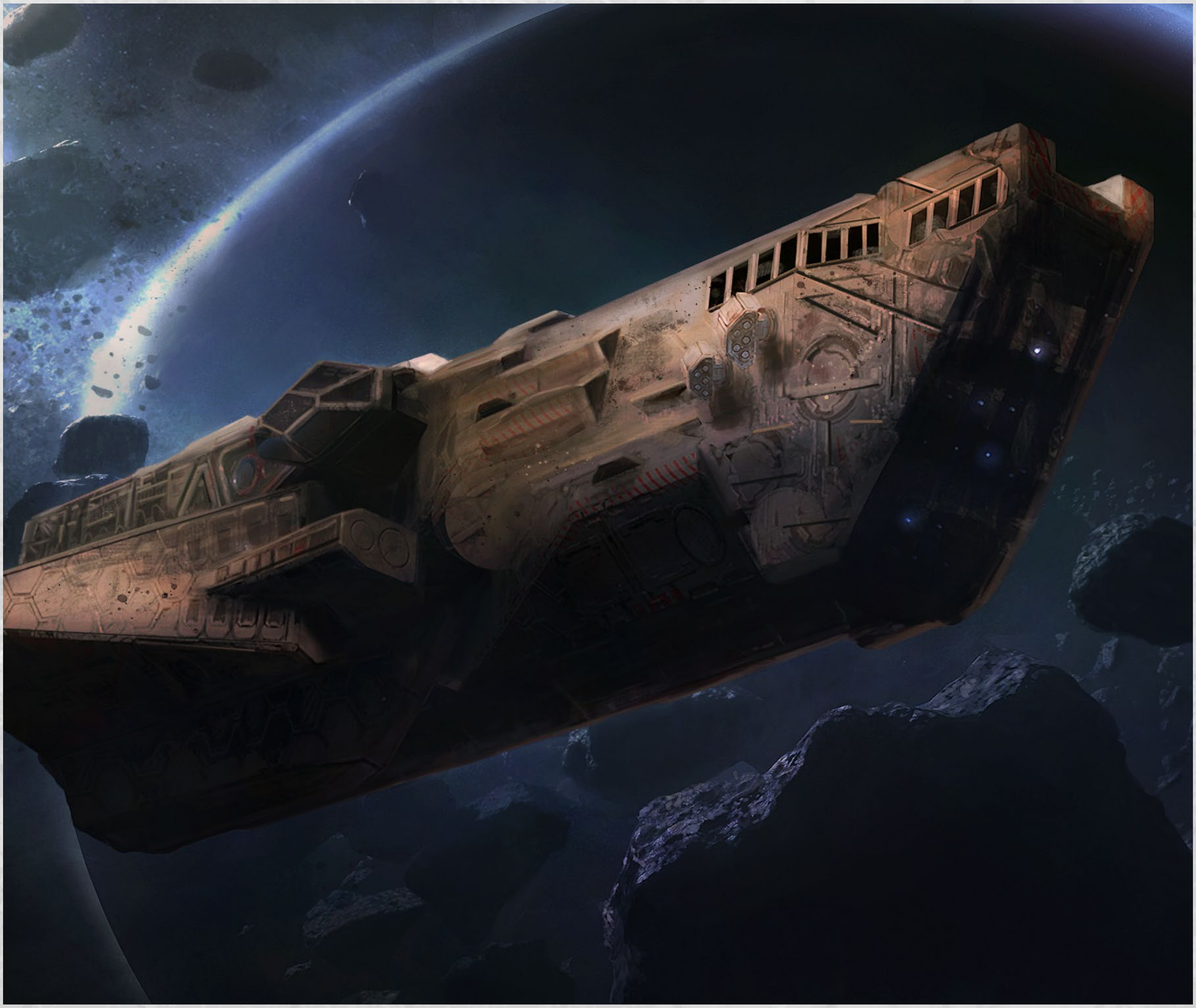
Automated Mission: An Automated Mission system controls a single mission-related piece of equipment. This might be a sensor array, robotic observatory or a more general system such as small craft launch and recovery equipment. It cannot maintain or repair the controlled system and will not operate it as well as a live crew but this system does allow a lone Hiver to run a ship fitted with an extensive long-range sensor suite or a similar large and complex system. It consumes 1% of the ship's tonnage at a cost of MCr1 per 100 tons of hull.

Package	Functions	Tons	Cost Per 100 Tons of Hull
Non-Starship, Full Automation	All	8%	10
Starship, Full Automation	All	12%	12.5
Non-Starship Critical Systems Automation	Piloting, astrogation, communications, life support, manoeuvre, power plant	8%	9
Starship Critical Systems Automation	Piloting, astrogation, communications, life support, manoeuvre, power plant, jump drive	10%	10
General Systems Automation	Communications, life support, general internal function	1%	2
Automated Piloting	Piloting and related sensor functions	1%	5
Automated Piloting and Astrogation	Piloting and related sensor functions, astrogation and related sensor functions	1%	8
Automated Power Plant	Power plant operations	2.5%	5
Automated Manoeuvre Drive	Manoeuvre drive operations	2%	5
Automated Jump Drive	Jump drive operations	2%	8
Integrated Engineering Automation	All drive functions	5%	10
Automated Weapon	One bay or battery	1%	1
Automated Mission	One major mission-related system	1%	1

CHAPTER - THIRTY TWO

HIVER STARSHIPS AND SPACECRAFT

The majority of Hiver ships and craft are multi-role vessels. Even the most combat-oriented of ships is likely to retain the capability to switch to another role at need – or more likely when a persuasive Hiver decides it wants such a ship. Hiver vessels and task forces are never optimal for their task but on the other hand a potential foe cannot be sure whether the large vessel entering their system is configured as an exploratory trade ship or a combat asset. The Hive Federation's naval strategy, such as it is, relies heavily on such uncertainty.



WHIMSY PERSONAL TRANSPORT

TL15		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	300 tons, Streamlined	—	15
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	14.4	7.2
M-Drive	Thrust 4 (energy efficient x3)	12	36
Jump Drive	Jump 2, (Energy Efficient x3)	20	45
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 160	8	16
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	62	—
Bridge	Command Centre	64	3
Automation	Full Automation	36	37.5
Computer	Computer/35	—	30
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
Weapons	Particle Barbette x 2	10	16
Systems	Repair Drones	3	0.6
	Medical Bay	4	2
Staterooms	Standard x3	12	3
Common Areas		4	0.4
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Library	—	—
Cargo		46	—

TOTAL: MCr 217.2

CREW

FULLY AUTOMATED

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr18100/month

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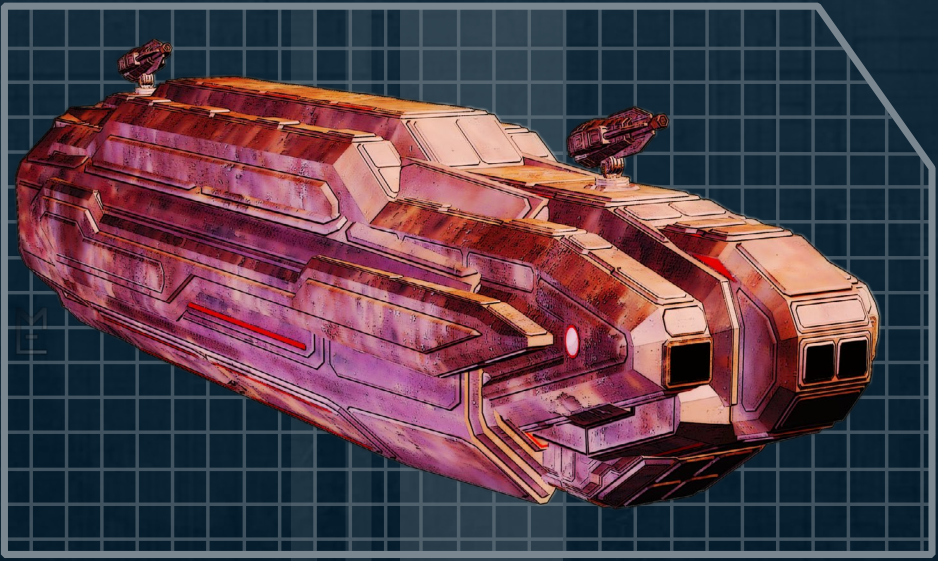
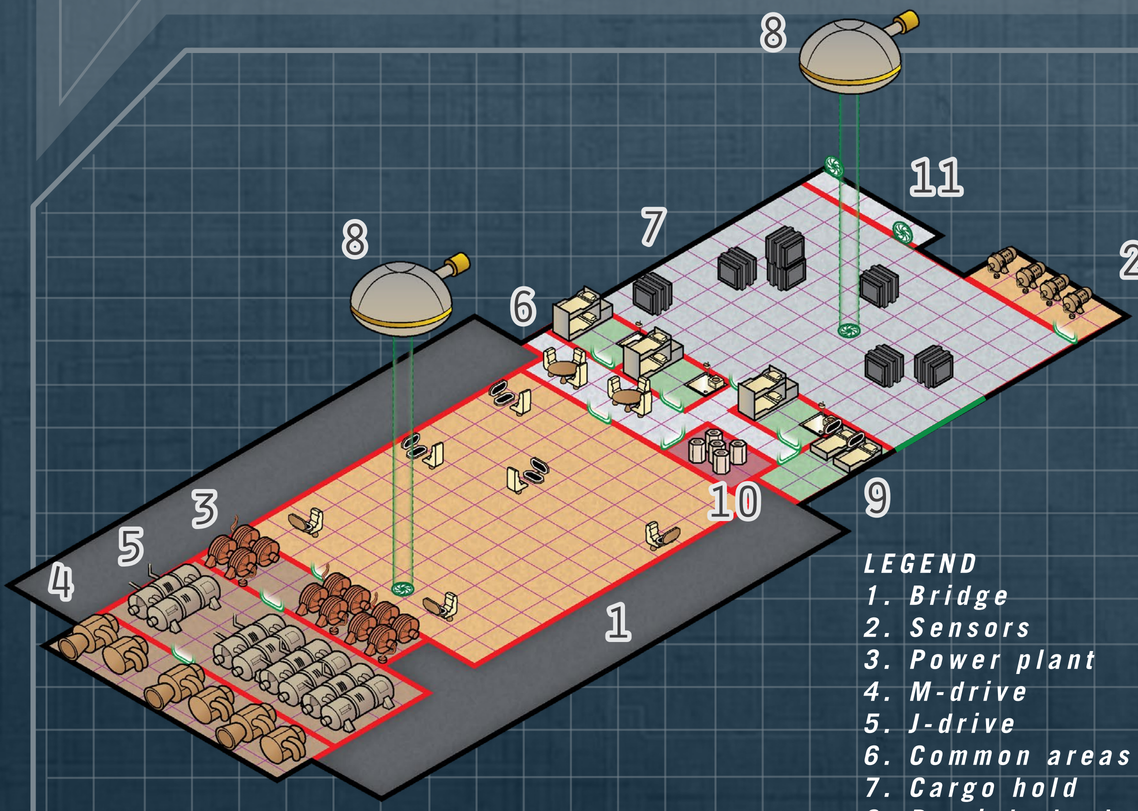
PURCHASE COST
MCr217.2

POWER REQUIREMENTS

30	MANOEUVRE DRIVE
60	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS
1	SYSTEMS
15	JUMP DRIVE
6	SENSORS
30	WEAPONS



120
HULL POINTS



DECK 1

LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. J-drive
6. Common areas
7. Cargo hold
8. Particle barbette
9. Med bay
10. Repair drones
11. Airlock

‘Whimsy’ is the nearest single-word approximation of a Gurvin sign code, which translates as ‘to be used as desired and to facilitate the user changing their mind for no apparent reason’. The Whimsy is intended as a personal transport for a Hiver whose business may be specialised or change focus regularly. As such it has to be large enough to fit a range of different equipment or carry all manner of cargo and necessities for the latest project.

Hull form is typically Hiver; a boxy structure with a planeing front as a token concession to aerodynamics. The entire hull is well armoured for a civilian ship, with a pair of particle accelerator barbettes on the dorsal surface for deterrence. Internally, the ship seems smaller than it actually is, since most systems are ‘black boxed’ away from the operator’s sight. The drives and power plant are conventionally located aft, with only small crawlways for inspection and maintenance.

Entry is by way of an airlock and ramp at the front of the vessel, giving access to the single occupied deck. This is located as centrally as possible with machinery spaces, fuel tanks and armour between the operator areas and any external threats. The forward airlock opens into a cargo area that has fittings for modular equipment, accommodation spaces or whatever else the user wants to carry. Aft of this is a tiny accommodation space with three multispecies cabins and a small common area. Immediately aft, through a heavy bulkhead, is the command centre.

The command area can be crewed by almost any species but can operate solely on the instructions of an unskilled individual. Within the bulkheaded area is a space reserved for the Hiver operator, set up to its liking. This area can be reconfigured to suit another species if necessary but vessels of this kind are normally encountered carrying a single Hiver or one with a small entourage of other races.

PRACTICALITY GENERAL- PURPOSE STARSHIP

TL15		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	1,000 tons, Streamlined	—	50
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	48	24
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient x3)	20	60
Jump Drive	Jump 2 (energy efficient x3)	55	123.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 360	22	44
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	205	—
Bridge	Command Centre	64	3
Automation	Integrated Engineering Automation System	50	100
	Automated Weapon Systems x2	20	20
	General Systems Automation	10	20
Computer	Computer/35	—	30
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Military Countermeasures Suite	15	28
Weapons	Particle Barbettes x4	20	32
	Missile Barbettes x4	20	16
	Nuclear Damper	10	10
Systems	Repair Drones	10	2
	Probe Drones x20	4	2
	Laboratory	16	4
	Library	4	4
	Medical Bay	4	2
	Workshop	6	0.9
	Full Hangar (50 tons)	100	20
Staterooms	Standard x9	36	4.5
Common Areas		36	3.6
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Library	—	—
Cargo/Modular Space		220	—

TOTAL: MCr 609.25

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr50708.33/month

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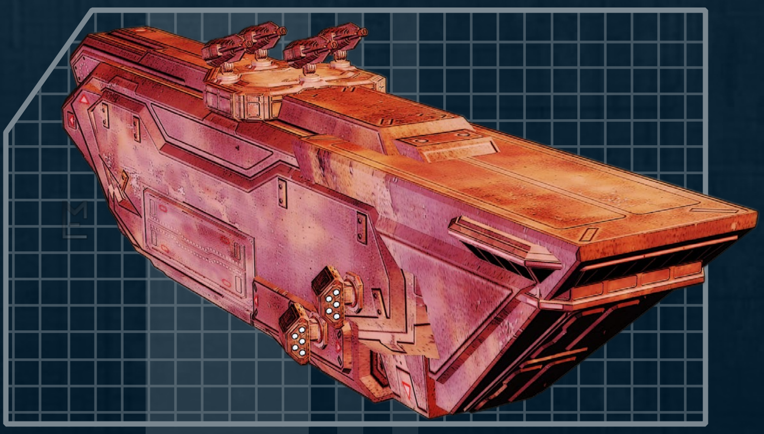
PURCHASE COST
MCr609.5

POWER REQUIREMENTS

50	MANOEUVRE DRIVE
200	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS
1	SYSTEMS
50	JUMP DRIVE
8	SENSORS
80	WEAPONS



400
HULL POINTS

As with many Hiver ships, the *Practicality* is named for a partial translation of a gesture sequence in Gurvin. Vessels of this type are very common in the Hive Federation and well beyond it, carrying out all manner of tasks from naval patrols to exploration, diplomacy and small-scale trade. Unlike the Whimsy, these ships are not fully automated and would normally carry a crew of mixed races. A vessel might be operated by one or more Hivers and their entourage but it is not uncommon to find Practicality ships plying the spaceways without a single Hiver aboard. Some are bought by non-Federation clients, who typically retain the multispecies control room and use the associated chamber as a ship's office or captain's suite.

The Practicality is constructed on a boxy hull, with a sloping front. Unusually, the slope is from ventral to dorsal, and takes the form of a large entry ramp which can be lowered gently or dropped with an almighty clang if circumstances warrant it. The ramp leads into the main cargo hold, which as usual for Hiver vessels is designed to be reconfigured for a variety of roles. The main hold can stow 200 tons of cargo or equipment, with the remaining 'cargo' capacity distributed in small blocks throughout the lower deck. These spaces are typically used to store equipment, mission supplies or other items that will not be moved in and out of the ship a lot, or else are converted into additional working spaces.

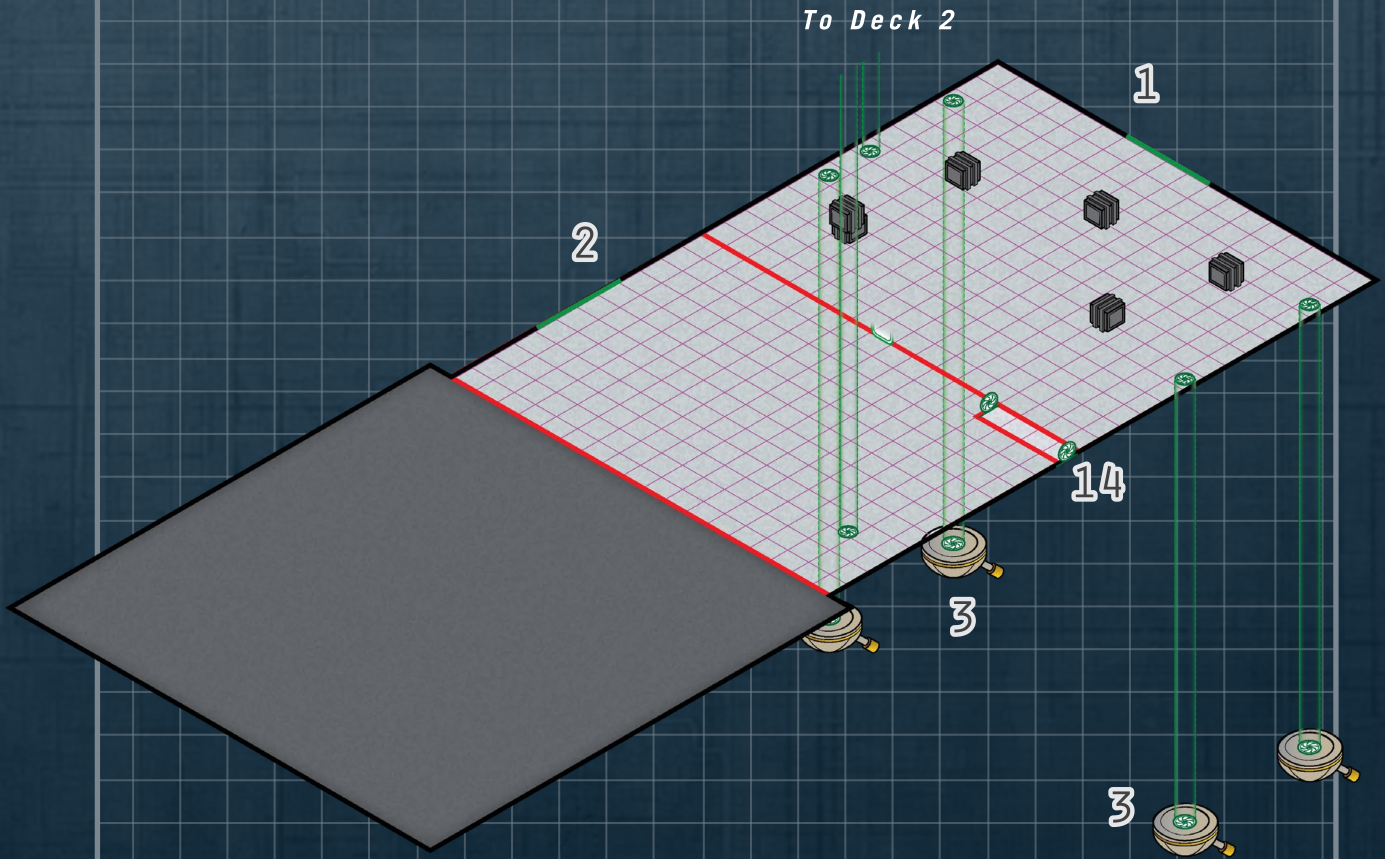
The remainder of the lower deck is taken up with fuel tanks and a hangar capable of accommodating up to 50 tons of small craft. This is awkward to use – to say the least – when the ship is on the ground but can function as a garage for ground vehicles or as an excursion bay for exploration work if small craft are not carried.

The upper deck contains the ship's centrally-located control room, with a crew or passenger accommodation area forward of it. This is laid out as three blocks of three cabins, each with a cabin-equivalent of common space and a 24-ton space at the very fore end of the ship. This has extensive observation windows on some vessels and is often used as a dining hall to impress visitors the ship's operator wants something from. Aft of the command space is the automated engineering section. This can run entirely without a live crew and even when crewed it is normally controlled from the command centre. There are accessways for maintenance but on some ships they are only opened during major refits.

The *Practicality* mounts four missile barbettes, two on each flank, which are fully automated. All are located close to configurable 'cargo' areas that can be used as missile magazines if the ship is serving in a paramilitary role. More commonly the ship does not carry reloads. A battery of four particle accelerator barbettes is located on the dorsal surface. These, too, are automated although the ship's electronic warfare and nuclear damper systems are not. A vessel serving as a warship would carry gunners and defensive technicians, all of whom crew their weapons from the command centre.

The upper deck also contains a curious 'mission complex'; a mostly open-plan area that is part library, part laboratory and part workshop. On some vessels the partition between this area and the medical bay is removed, creating a distinct mad-scientist's lair feeling for some visitors.

Automation levels are high, enabling this relatively large ship to be crewed by just one or two people at need. The vessel is clumsy in this mode, however, and has no capacity to deal with disasters. More commonly a multiskilled entourage will accompany a Hiver operator and ships that might encounter danger will usually have a full crew.


To Deck 2
1
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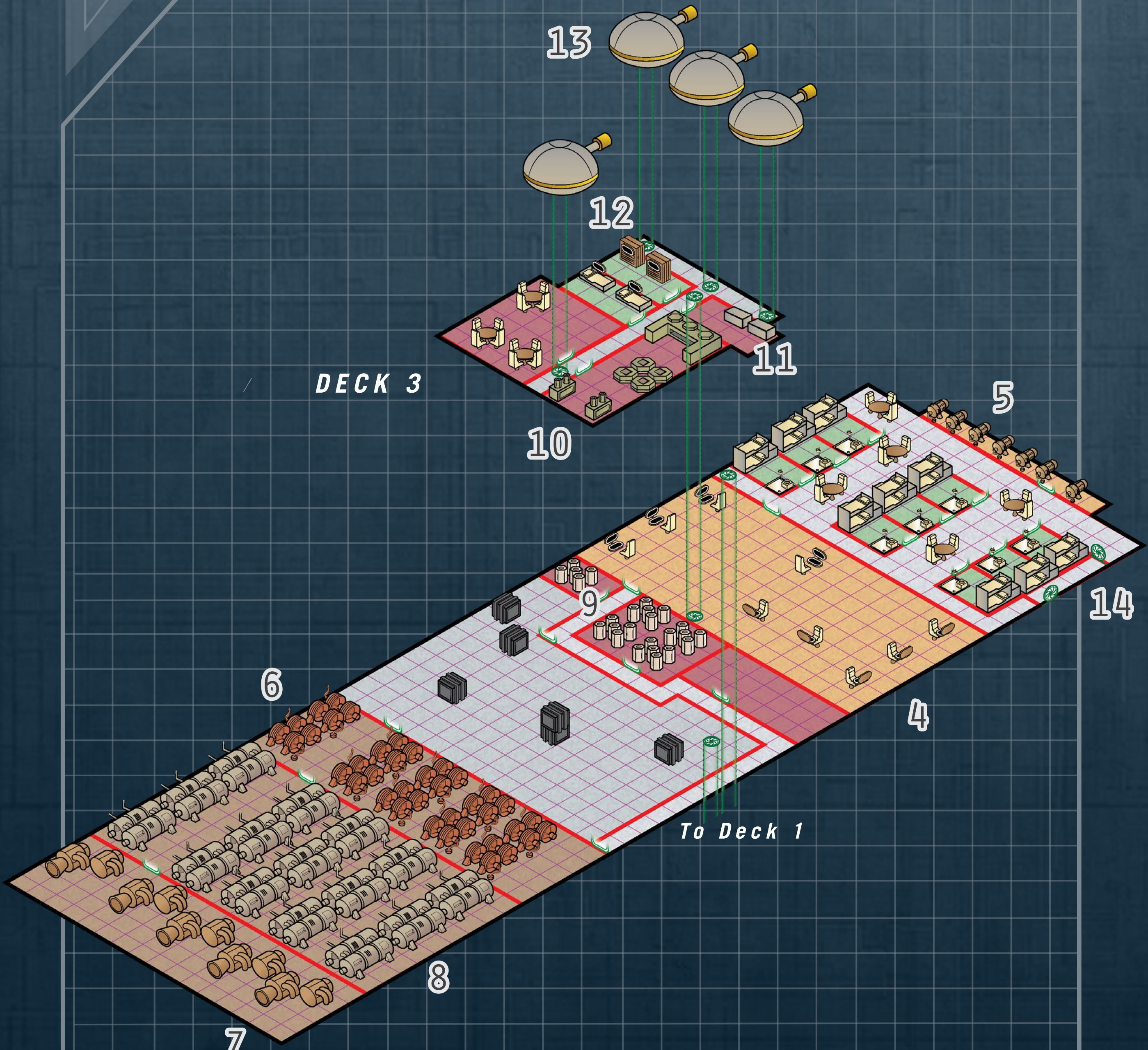
DECK 1

LEGEND
1. Cargo hold
2. Hanger
3. Particle barbettes


13
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DECK 3
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To Deck 1
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DECK 2

LEGEND

4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Power plant
7. M-drive
8. J-drive
9. Repair drones
10. Laboratory
11. Workshop
12. Library
13. Missile barbettes
14. Airlocks

CREDIBILITY MAJOR STARSHIP

TL15		TON	COST (MCR)
Hull	10,000 tons, Standard	—	500
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	480	240
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy efficient x3)	200	600
Jump Drive	Jump 2 (energy efficient x3)	550	1237.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 4000	200	400
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 20 weeks of operation	2,100	—
Bridge	Command Centre	95	100
Automation	General Systems Automation	100	200
Computer	Core/80	—	95
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Military Countermeasures Suite	15	28
Weapons	Small Particle Bays x3	150	60
	Small Missile Bays x3	150	36
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x30	30	120
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x30	30	52.5
	Point Defence Batteries (type III) x6	120	120
	Nuclear Dampers x6	60	120
Systems	Repair Drones	100	20
	Libraries x6	24	24
	Briefing Rooms x6	24	3
	Medical Bays x6	24	12
	Armouries x6	6	1.5
	Workshops x2	12	0.3
	Full Hangars (50 tons) x6	600	120
Staterooms	Standard x75	300	37.5
Common Areas		150	15
Software	Manoeuvre/0	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Library	—	—
Cargo		4,475	—

TOTAL: MCR 4147.8

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X12, MAINTENANCE X4, GUNNERS X36, ADMINISTRATORS X4, OFFICERS X3

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr345650/month

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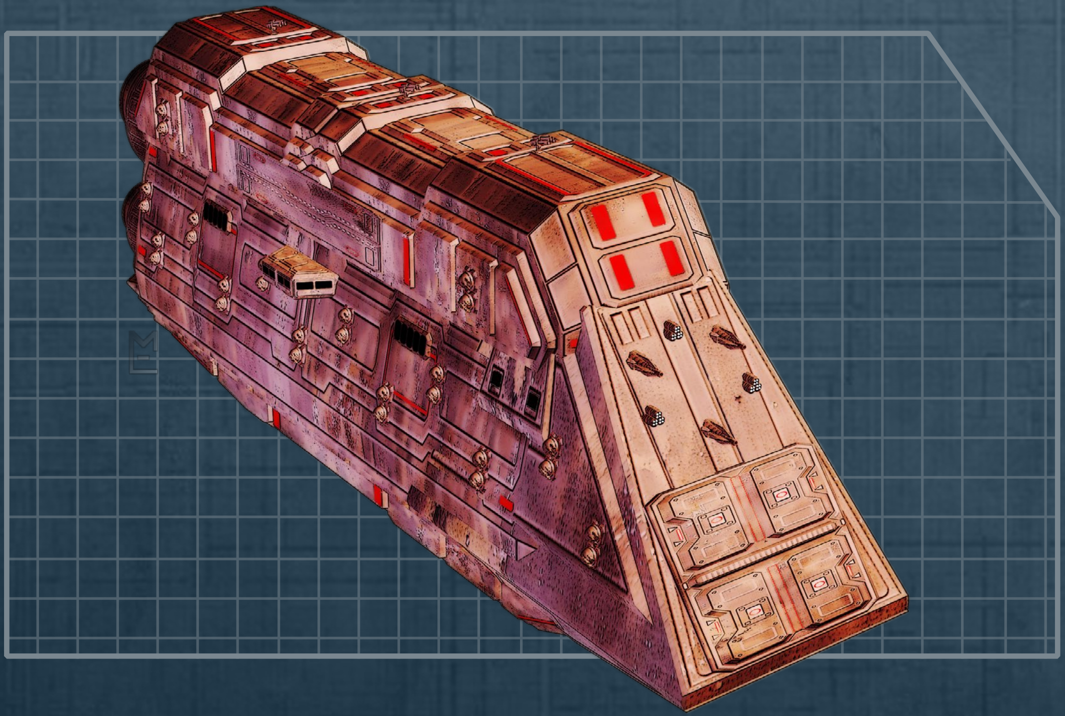
PURCHASE COST
MCr4147.8

POWER REQUIREMENTS

500	MANOEUVRE DRIVE
2,000	BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS
500	JUMP DRIVE
6	SYSTEMS
8	SENSORS
825	WEAPONS



4,000

HULL POINTS

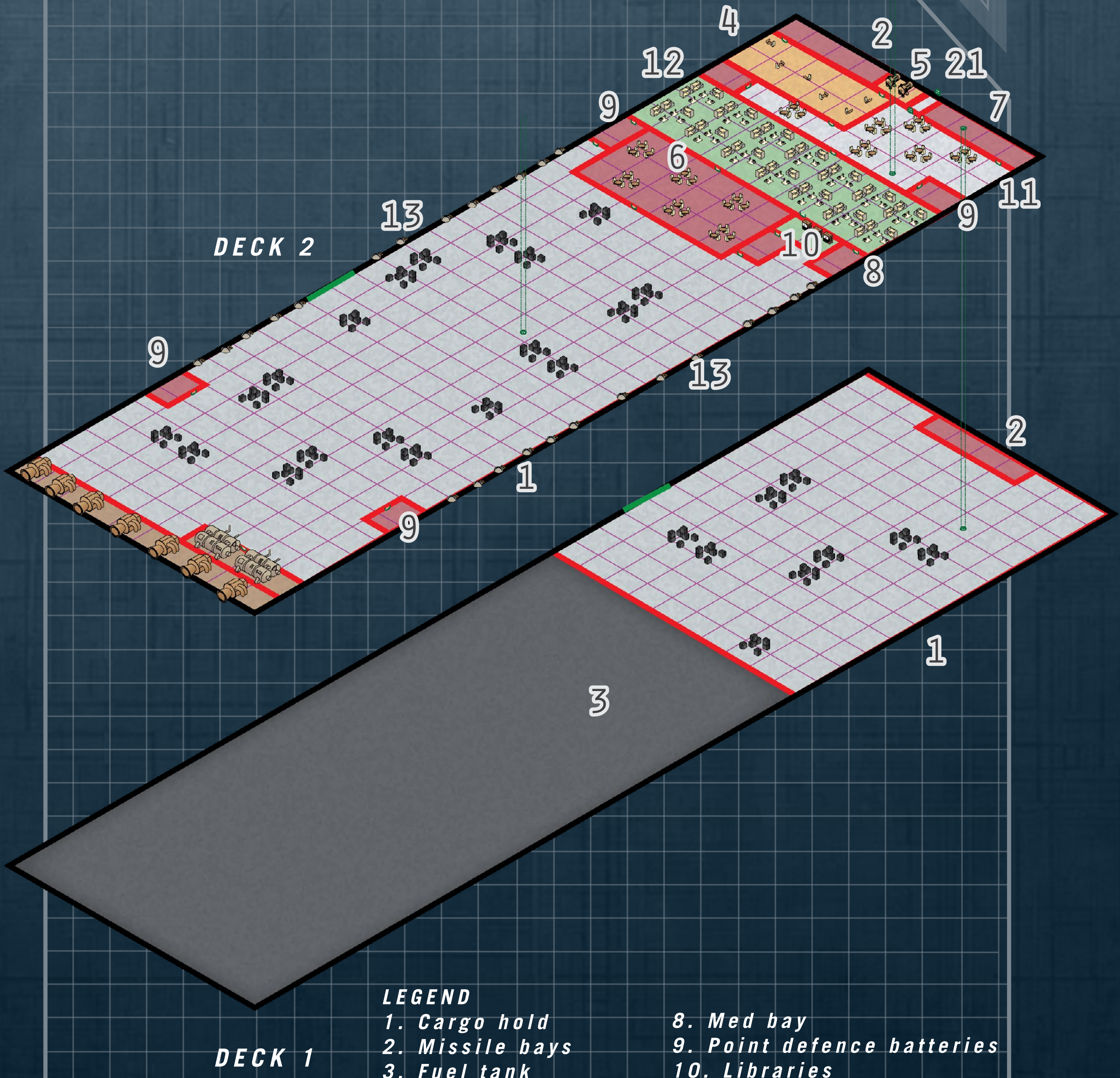
The *Credibility* is named for its connotations of persuasiveness and effectiveness as a diplomatic platform, military intervention vessel and economic warfare participant, although most examples serve in relatively mundane roles such as cargo transports and liners.

Hull form is typically 'Hive Federation', utilitarian and rather ugly. The main hull is constructed in the form of a lightly armoured box, with a sloped frontal surface. There are three decks running the length of the ship, each with a general function. The lowest deck is double-height and given over almost entirely to modular space and fuel. This may be used for cargo or fitted out as the operator requires. On vessels operating in the commercial sector this area may be fitted out for passenger transport, sometimes in great luxury. A rapid transfer to military operations can result in these expensive fittings being wrecked by ground troops using them as barracks.

The uppermost deck contains part of the drive and power system, fuel and hangars for up to six 50-ton small craft. The middle deck centres on a command suite plus a library/briefing room/conference hall suitable for most missions the vessel may undertake. The remainder of the drives and fuel are aft of this command complex, with crew accommodation forward.

As with many Hiver vessels, defences are good. The hull is lightly armoured and protected by an extensive point-defence fit. Electronic warfare, sandcasters and nuclear dampers provide additional defence. The laser turrets are grouped in pairs all over the hull, with all primary weapons located on the sloping forward face of the vessel. Three particle accelerator bays and three missile bays are grouped in a rosette arrangement reminiscent of the six eyes of a Hiver, alternating weapon types around the ring.

The *Credibility* is not heavily automated, although general functions are normally run by automatic systems. Since it is intended to function as a warship at times, this class tends to run with a full crew in case of damage. The cargo area can be used to carry a significant force of ground troops, allowing a single Credibility to deal with most minor trouble. Typically the possibility that the ship might be full of bloodthirsty Ithklur warriors is the 'presumed stick' that accompanies whatever carrots the Hiver in charge of the vessel feels like offering in negotiation. Indeed, much of the credibility of this class (and its negotiator-operator) comes from the possibility that it might be equipped for planetside intervention. Exactly what any given ship is set up to do is rarely obvious and often deliberately misrepresented.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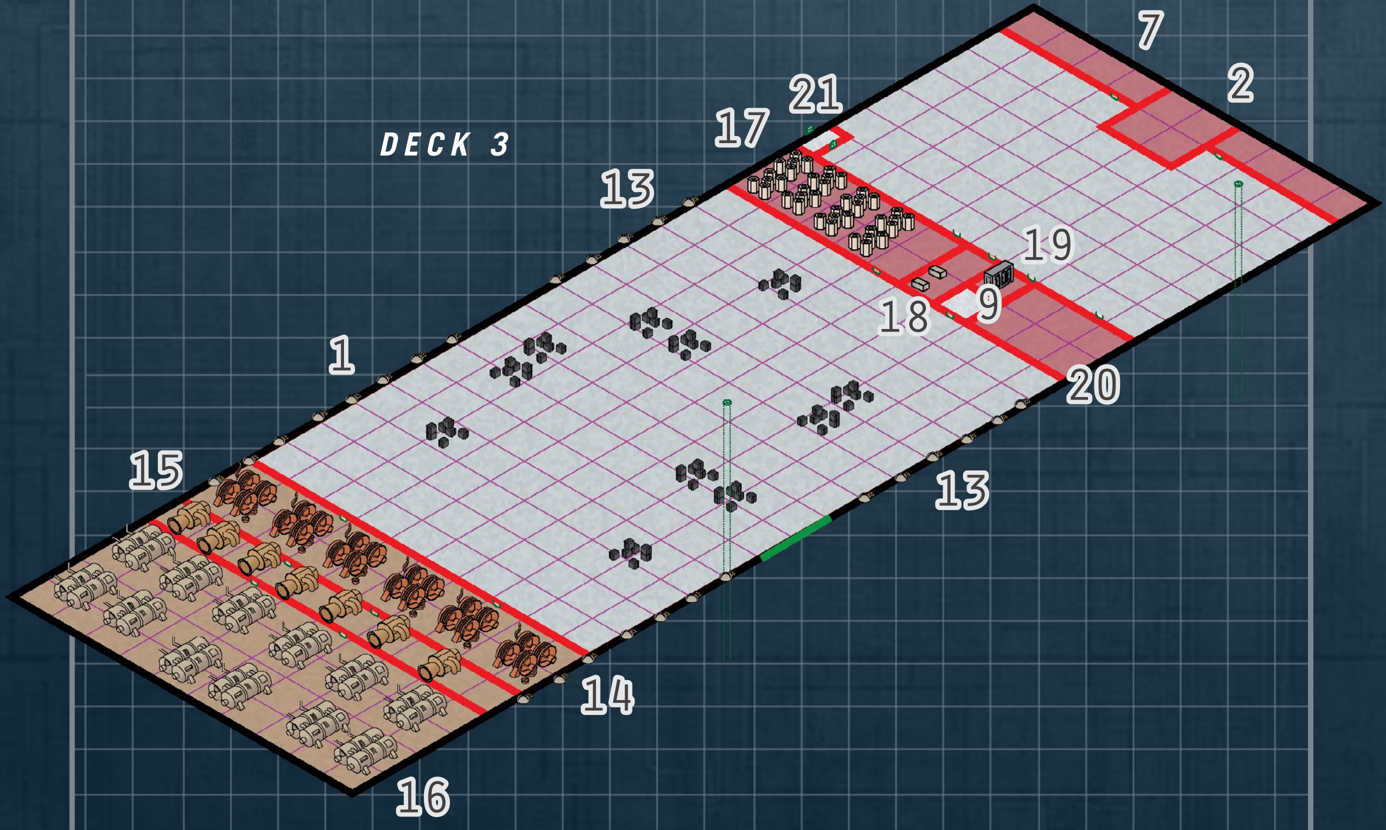
DECK 1

LEGEND

1. Cargo hold
2. Missile bays
3. Fuel tank
4. Bridge
5. Sensors
6. Briefing rooms
7. Particle bays
8. Med bay
9. Point defence batteries
10. Libraries
11. Common area
12. Staterooms
13. Triple turrets

DECK 3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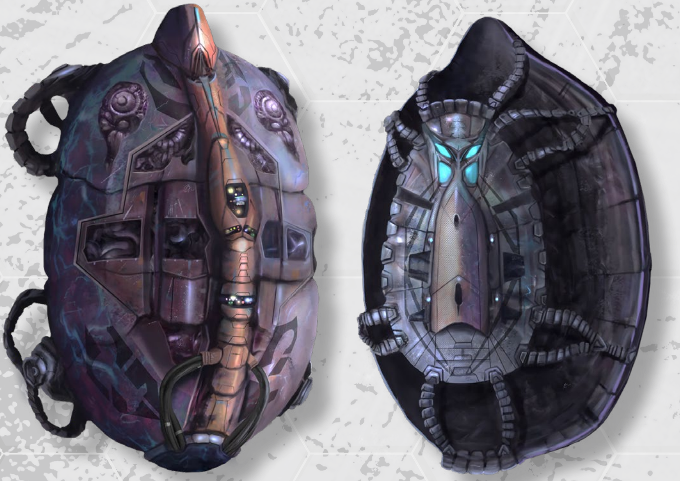
LEGEND
14. Power plant
15. M-drive
16. J-drive
17. Repair drones
18. Workshop
19. Armouries
20. Nuclear Damper
21. Airlocks

HIVE FEDERATION

The majority of Hiver equipment is broadly similar to that used by other races, although with handles and grips suitable for Hiver 'fingers'. The unusual body structure of Hivers means that devices intended to be held in two hands by a humanoid are extremely awkward for a Hiver to use and are often completely redesigned in terms of ergonomics. Function tends to be more or less the same as elsewhere, however, and in many cases there are Hiver and non-Hiver variants of common items with the same internal components.

A common solution to the 'two hands' problem is for items to be carried on a harness strapped to the Hiver's body or sometimes slung around the 'neck' formed by the primary appendage when elevated for vision. It is not uncommon to see a Hiver walking on four limbs with the 'head' elevated, reaching over its own back with the sixth (reproductive) limb to operate a device strapped to its torso. For the most part, however, Hivers prefer to get others to do the work and may carry nothing more than a Voder.

Voder (TL12): Manufactured with varying degrees of sophistication, the Voder is often assumed to be nothing more than a translation device from 'Hiver' (more commonly Gurvin) to Anglic or whatever other language is desired. This is its main function, translating the movements of the Hiver's body and limbs into audible sounds, but a Voder does more than this.



The translation function alone is impressive, since it relies on the detection of movements by contact with the Hiver's body rather than visual cues. A sign-to-audio translation is not all that difficult if the device is held by someone else and pointed at the Hiver but Hivers are not keen on the idea that they can be silenced by their Voder-holder wandering off or foolishly (perhaps deliberately) allowing an obstruction to come between the Hiver and its subject mid-manipulation.

A Voder also functions as a portable computer suite and electronic communications device. Most Voders are heavily encrypted and secured, and capable of interfacing with almost any device in use throughout the Hive Federation. It is widely suspected that electronic equipment exported by the Federation contains 'backdoors' that can be exploited by any Hiver with a Voder. Whether or not this is true, a Voder is powerful enough to support a potent electronics intrusion software system and has a transmitter capable of broadcasting a jamming signal if the device is suitably configured.

Some Voders also carry sensor packages. Most of these are simple medical monitoring suites, which help the Hiver spot deficiencies early and analyse potential food in great detail. Some have more specialist systems such as atmosphere and water analysis devices, radar mapping of the surrounding terrain and so forth.

A standard Voder capable of translating most known languages costs Cr150. One capable of running a medical monitoring and food-analysis package typically costs Cr250. For Cr500 a Hiver can obtain a Voder capable of running any one of the following packages, one of which is pre-installed. Of course, a Hiver may have a Voder for every occasion.

Medical Package: A medical package monitors the Hiver's general health and condition, and allows early detection of deficiency diseases. It will advise on treatments and remedies, and can administer dietary supplements or mild pharmaceuticals to assist in healing. A Hiver with a medical package in place regenerates damage 25% more quickly and can survive more serious injuries. The Hiver can take additional damage up to its twice starting END before actually dying (see Hiver Physiology on page 211).

Navigation Package: A navigation package includes radar and laser mapping tools and a holographic map display. This can be supplemented by data from small drones or devices carried by other personnel and also includes a basic mineral/chemical analysis unit. From this, a navigation package can extrapolate the likely presence of valuable materials or possible toxins and create a line of sight map of the surrounding topography within 200 metres, as well as an estimate of underlying rock types. Over time it is possible to build up a basic estimate of local climate and weather, plus an idea of conditions in recent history. Hivers being what they are, this system is more commonly used to make sure the Hiver is safe than to conduct bold exploration of an untamed world.

Electronics (Intrusion) Package: An intrusion package contains a set of passive and active electronic sensors, enabling the user to trace power cables or detect transmissions. The ostensible purpose of such devices is to aid in locating faults aboard a starship or in an advanced installation and enable communications to be established with any radio-frequency system. It is widely suspected – and correctly so – that an electronics package also contains a radio jammer and 'bug stomper', which will cause electronic listening devices to burn out or cease transmitting. It can be used to detect such devices without disabling them, if desired.

The existence of an intrusion package is less widely suspected. This is a set of auto-hacking tools optimised to the protocols of standard commercial devices. It can automatically access any low-end commercial electronics system produced by the Hive Federation unless it has had after-market security alterations. This allows the Hiver to penetrate basic devices such as cheap personal communications or entertainment units. More secure systems such as standard electronic locks or more expensive communications equipment or those that have been modified to remove the backdoor protocols, can be penetrated if a Difficult (10+) check is made. The unit is treated as having a skill level of 0 if the Hiver lacks relevant skills.

An intrusion package also allows an attempt to penetrate fully secured systems but in this case it is merely a facilitator for the Hiver's own hacking skills. The intrusion system provides remote access but no more than that. It cannot automatically grant access to a secured starship's bridge, for example, but it would allow the Hiver to try to bypass the locking system. The door to the purser's office on a typical free trader, on the other hand, might be operated by a Hiver-supplied mechanism which has not been modified, allowing the user of an intrusion-equipped Voder to wander in and out at will.

PERSONAL TRANSPORT

Hiver vehicles are generally similar to those used by other races, only with mushroom-shaped stools for Hivers to use as well as more conventional seating. Most vehicles are set up either with Hiver controls or a system more suited to another race, as there is generally little room for both types of controls. However, function and cost tends to be about the same as in other cultures.

Hivers do make extensive use of personal grav harnesses. This is the equivalent of a grav belt but built into a utility harness. The grav lifting unit masses eight kilograms at TL12, dropping to five kilograms at TL14, but is often left off unless expected to be necessary. Without the lifter the harness resembles a typical Hiver's equipment harness at first glance but the additional straps and mounting points will usually be suffice to identify it on a closer look. When active, the harness functions like a standard grav belt. It costs Cr100000.

FURNITURE

Hivers can use beds made for humans and similar creatures, although they prefer a double bed. Any similar sized space with something soft to lie on will do; a Hiver will simply drop to the floor and curl its legs around it when it wants to sleep. By choice, Hivers use a sleeping mat that is circular with a slightly domed centre. Most do not seem particularly attached to their mat but some will take a mat from their home nest with them on distant travels.

Hivers require different plumbing since they cannot use human toilets very easily but most other furnishings can be removed or ignored. Hivers do not use chairs and do not really need any sort of support – again, they just plonk themselves down on the ground when they want to rest. However, when dealing with humans, Ithklur and similar 'far-too-tall' races, Hivers like to use a 'Hiver stool'.

A Hiver stool is a mushroom-shaped support for the Hiver's body, which allows it to keep its 'head' at the height of the tall races. This is supposedly for comfort but there are many who believe that it has more to do with the difficulty of manipulating someone who is looking down at you.

WEAPONS

Wherever possible, Hivers avoid personal combat. There are many races in the Hive Federation better suited to it, and some even like fighting. If a Hiver has to engage in combat it will either be desperate self-defence or in order to secure some hugely important item or goal. Fighting is unpleasant, frightening and at best a means to an end. Hiver weaponry reflects this philosophy.

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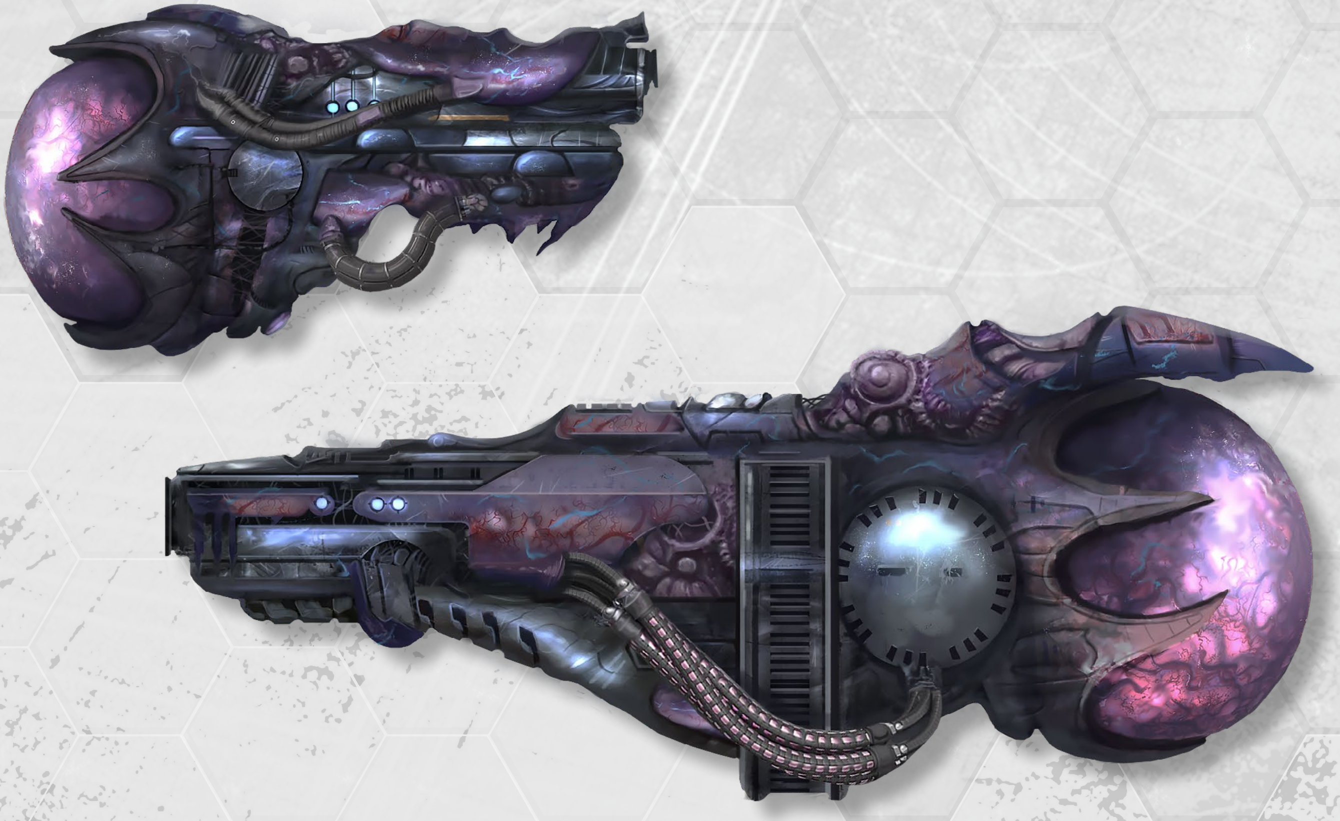
PERSONAL WEAPONS

The two commonest Hiver personal weapons are a gauss pistol and a slightly larger gauss personal defence weapon. The pistol is essentially the working parts of the weapon issued to Ithklur and other Hive Federation ground troops, fitted with a bulb-like grip. Using this weapon makes the Hiver look like it is squirting condiments out of a squeezy bottle but the weapon itself is quite effective. The personal defence weapon is a little larger and more bulky and custom-designed for Hivers. Its magazine takes the form of a ring running around the outside of the receiver, creating a more or less symmetrical shape. Rate of fire is very high, even for a gauss weapon.

When using either of these weapons in its primary limb, a Hiver gains DM+2 to hit targets within 25 metres. This is due to the fact that its eyes are located in a ring around the weapon, taking point-and-shoot to a whole new level. A Hiver in combat at this distance may be more interested in running for cover but when the circumstances are right (such as shooting an unaware enemy in the back), great accuracy is possible.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Hiver Gauss Pistol	13	20	3D	1	Cr600	40	Cr20	AP3, Auto 2
Hiver Gauss PDW	13	30	3D+1	2	Cr1100	75	Cr45	AP3, Auto 4

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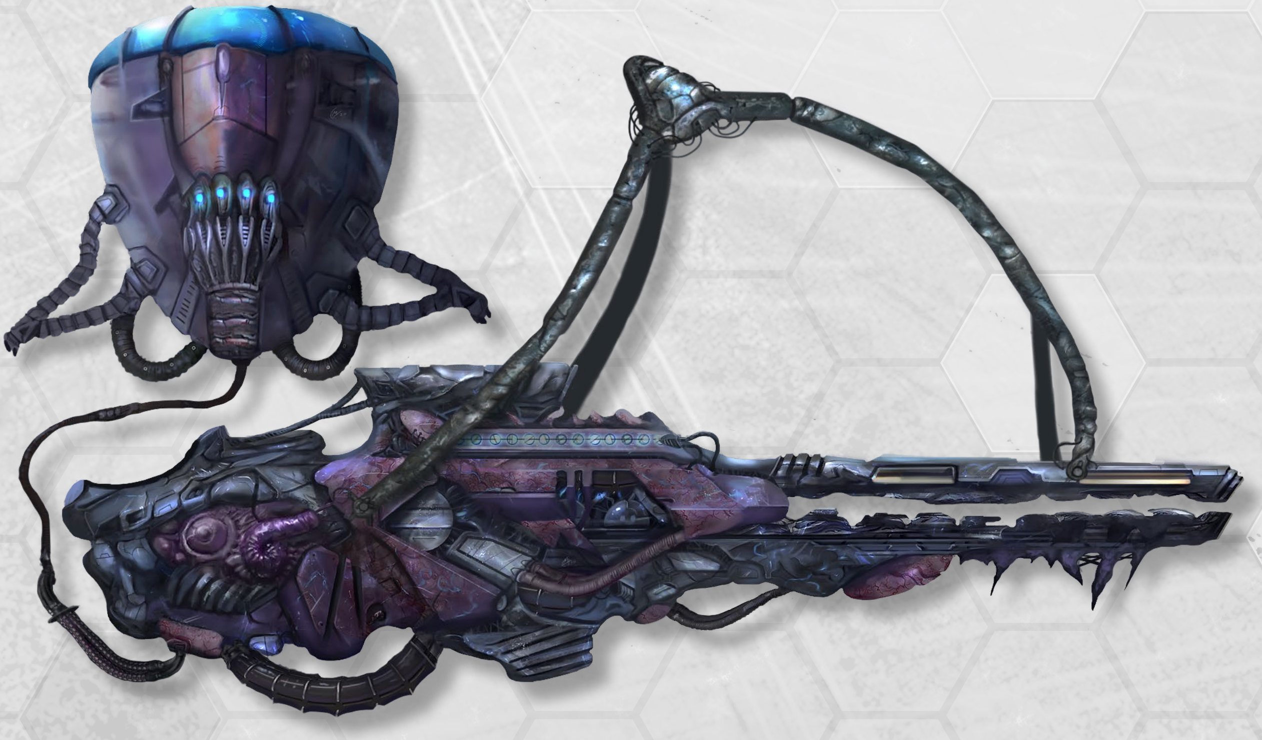
COMBAT WEAPONS

Hivers rarely use what might be termed combat weapons; any Hiver expecting a fight will make itself scarce or enlist someone else to fight for it if at all possible. On the occasions where combat is inevitable or even desirable, Hivers prefer to fight from a distance.

The standard combat weapon is based on the gauss sniper rifles used by humanoid Hive Federation ground troops but designed to be carried on a harness worn by the Hiver. The weapon is offset to one side with the barrel protruding past a comfortable position for the Hiver's 'head' so that no accidents can occur. It is aimed using electronic sights on the weapon, feeding into a display viewed from a head-down position and fired using a control manipulated by the Hiver's 'rear' limb. The firing position has been unkindly described as 'head down, tail up' but it keeps the Hiver low and stable. It is possible to shoot from behind cover with nothing but a few fingers and the weapon above the parapet, so to speak. A Hiver standing still to shoot is very stable on four (or even five) limbs and gains DM+2 to aiming actions rather than the usual DM+1.

A heavier weapon of the same design is available for use in heavy combat situations. Again, it is rare for a Hiver to be in such a situation but there have been occasions when it is necessary. The weapon is chambered for 15mm munitions fired in 3-round bursts at relatively low velocity for a gauss system. Ammunition is either airburst-capable explosive/fragmentation rounds for use against 'soft' targets or a discarding sabot round, which attains speeds more typical of gauss munitions. These rounds can penetrate heavy armour or light vehicles. A Hiver using one of these weapons can act as fire support for more conventionally equipped troops, not coincidentally giving it an excuse to hang back in a safe position.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Magazine Cost	Traits
Hiver Gauss Sniper Rifle	13	1000	5D	6	Cr3500	40	Cr75	AP6, Scope
Hiver Gauss Support Weapon (HE/Frag)	13	1200	8D	12	Cr7500	30	Cr200	Auto 2, Blast 2
Hiver Gauss Support Weapon (Discarding Sabot)	13	1200	8D	12	Cr7500	30	Cr200	Auto 2, AP 8

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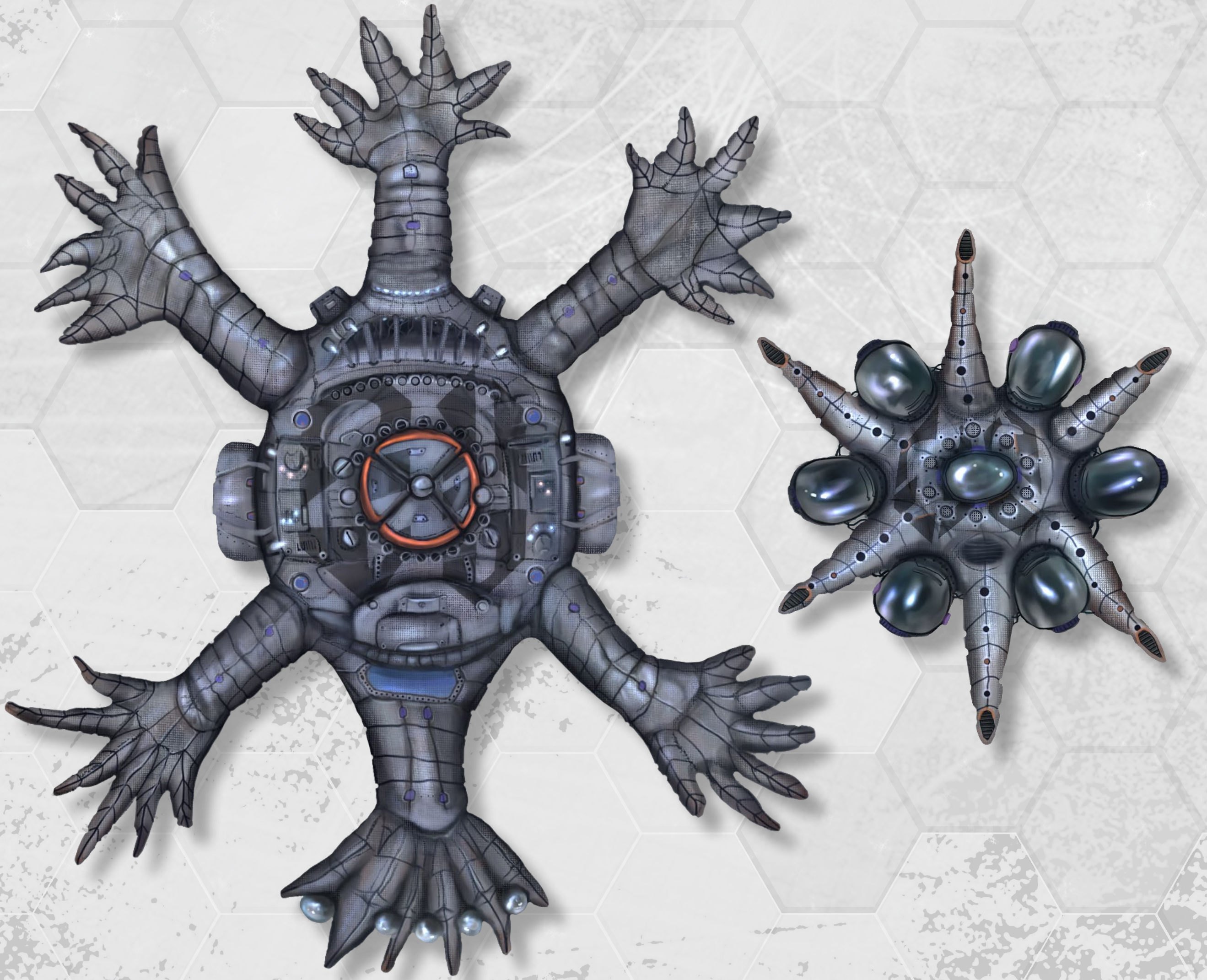
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Hivers do not wear clothing as such, although they may use clothing-like items for practical purposes. Most Hivers wear a utility harness which allows tools and other items to be carried, and those likely to be operating outside may attach pouches containing rainproof sheets if desired. If a filter mask or similar device is required, it must be of a design that attaches to the harness and fits over the Hiver's blowhole. Face-type masks are useless, though a transparent cover for the primary limb is sometimes used to prevent dust and other irritants affecting the eyes.

Hivers, rather obviously, cannot wear protective equipment manufactured for other races. Their vacc suits have similar operating parameters to those meant for humans, and cost the same, but are of an entirely different shape. Equipment intended to protect against damage is often made from the same materials as human gear but shaped to Hiver requirements.

Ballistic cloth body armour is available for Hivers. Body protection can take the form of a 'vest' covering only the torso or a 'jacket' covering all limbs but the primary one. A separate 'helmet' protecting this limb but leaving the sensory organs free is available for use with either. In addition, a psionic shield device is available which can be worn on a harness or incorporated into a vacc suit or body armour. This costs Cr4000 and must be built into a suit at the time of manufacture.



Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Hiver Ballistic Vest	+4	10	—	7	Cr500	None
Hiver Ballistic Jacket	+6	10	—	10	Cr650	None
Hiver Ballistic Helmet	+2	10	—	2	Cr250	None

HIVER TRAVELLERS

Creating a Hiver Traveller is generally similar to other races, though physical differences and the unusual nature of Hiver society may produce some divergence from the norm. There is no reason why a Hiver might not wander off on its own to travel and indulge its curiosity, but most Hivers would not call this 'adventuring' – that sounds a bit dangerous. A Hiver Traveller is likely to want to travel in comfort and to take safe options unless the more hazardous approach is highly interesting. It will also prefer to find at least a couple of companions who can take risks for it, and may go to considerable lengths to cultivate a relationship with someone who can be used as a bodyguard, distraction and/or catspaw.

CREATING A HIVER TRAVELLER

Creating a Hiver Traveller is generally similar to other races, except that there is no formal rank structure in Hiver society. Hivers have no equivalent of SOC, but instead use a characteristic named Resolve (RES). Most characteristics are rolled on 2D, but Hiver Travellers roll Resolve on 1D+6.

The following modifiers apply to all Hivers: STR -2

Resolve (RES)

The Resolve characteristic is a measure of the Hiver's will, intellect and desire to get its own way. It is linked to curiosity in some ways, and might be considered an enabler. That is, a Hiver who is highly curious but timid will not learn much; one who has big plans and good manipulation skills but lacks conviction will never achieve much. A Hiver with a low Resolve tends to be a conformist, a good and dependable member of society who will cooperate with others for the common good and does not try to use others as pawns all that much – in other words the sort of person manipulators like to make use of. A Resolve score of 7+ indicates that the Hiver has sufficient conviction to undertake significant manipulations – though whether it has the finesse to carry them off is another matter.

Deficiency Diseases

Whilst being debilitated by disease is not the epitome of free-wheeling interstellar adventure, it is a factor in the lives of Hiver Travellers. It can be assumed that when a Hiver is in a civilised environment with a wide range of foodstuffs available it will be able to obtain what it needs for a proper diet, even if the people selling it do not imagine anyone would eat that stuff. However, when a Hiver is operating in the wilds or on a backwater planet – or in a closed environment like a starship where care has not been taken to ensure correct food is available, an imbalance or shortage may become serious.

Every 2D days without a guaranteed correct diet, a Hiver must make an Average (8+) END check. If this is unsuccessful, negative Effect must be subtracted from one of the Hiver's six characteristics, selected at random. A deficiency disease can affect cognitive ability or physical capabilities, or both. Once deterioration has begun it continues until the disease is treated. Every 2D days, the Hiver loses 1D from one of its characteristics chosen at random. Treatment requires restoring a proper balance of nutrients and some supportive medical care. Every 1D days with a proper diet the Hiver regains the Effect of an Average (8+) Medic check or a minimum of 1 point from the worst affected of its characteristics. If any characteristic reaches zero as a result of deficiency disease the Hiver is incapacitated. It loses 1 point from each characteristic until all are at zero, at which point it dies.

Hiver Traits

Hiver Travellers all have the following Traits.

Hiver Physiology: Hivers gain a +2 DM on all checks to resist disease or chemical toxins, and have a natural 2 points of armour from their leathery skin. Hivers can regrow small parts of their body - fingers, sections of skin or even organs, but not eyes or ears – even if completely severed. If a Hiver takes enough damage to kill it – STR, DEX and END all reduced to zero, it becomes dormant rather than dying. The Hiver can take additional damage up to its END before actually dying. If it is not killed, it begins to regenerate negative END at the rate of 1D3 points per hour. When END reaches 0, STR, DEX and END are reset to 1 and the Hiver can begin to function again. If a Hiver's END is reduced to a level worse than its negative END, it dies. Hivers are prone to deficiency diseases and must maintain a correct diet. If the proper balance of nutrients is not available for 2D days, the Hiver may become ill. See Deficiency Diseases, above.

Physical Coward: Hivers are frightened of physical violence and aggression. If a Hiver is attacked at a range of 25m or less, or feels threatened by such an attack they must make an immediate Resolve (RES) check. This will usually be Average (8+) difficulty but may be modified by circumstances. If the Hiver fails the check it must immediately abandon what it is doing and make a defensive reaction. This may mean scuttling away to hide or seek cover, dashing behind a crewmate or simply cowering on the ground, but may not be an offensive action of any kind. If the check is passed the Hiver's rational thoughts quell its instinctive fear and it may act normally, but suffers a -2DM on all actions made whilst under such a threat.

Sense of Smell/No Sense of Smell: Most Hivers have no sense of smell, and receive the No Sense of Smell trait. They can taste ingested items and may faintly detect very strong odours through their cloaca but cannot detect smells through respiration. Irritants such as tear gas will still work on such Hivers, but they cannot be detected by sense of smell. On a straight 2D roll of 9+, made when the Hiver reaches maturity, the Hiver has a sense of smell. It is not very good by human standards, imposing a -2DM on attempts to detect or identify anything by smell alone.

Stability: Hivers are relatively low to the ground and can use as many as six limbs to balance if necessary. Alternatively, Hivers can stand on some limbs and grasp nearby objects. In any situation where immobility is important, or where a Hiver must move under difficult conditions, a +2DM applies. Thus a Hiver moving across a slanted deck towards a hatch as the air rushes out of a holed compartment will generally fare better than a humanoid crewmate. One limb could be used to carry or drag something – or perhaps someone – whilst others provide traction and grip. The positive DM can be applied whilst climbing, providing holds are available suitable foe Hiver's hand-equivalents.

HIVER SKILLS

Hivers can learn almost any skill that other races can. However, they cannot gain Leadership skill. If a Hiver wants people to do something it will manipulate them with deception, diplomacy or persuasion instead.

Animals

Hivers do not interact with animals the way most other species do. Animals are not used for farming or riding in low-tech Hiver societies, and riding an animal for recreation is unheard-of. Instead, Animals skill relates mainly to 'farming' small creatures as part of maintaining a good diet. A Hiver might horrify crewmates by allowing a nest of rats to exist aboard their ship, trapping the odd one to add to its food. More commonly the animals are worms, insects and the like which can be easily contained. The Hiver take on Animals skill also includes establishing a cooperative arrangement with larger creatures which have a suitable burrow, such as the snohl.

Carouse

Hivers do not party like other creatures. Meaningless chit-chat, canapes or riotous drinking songs hold no attraction … but that does not mean a Hiver cannot be the life and soul of the party. Of course, it is all a poise. A Hiver can manipulate people so they have a good time, to various ends. Whether it is to make contacts or to get someone to do a specific thing, a partying Hiver is a working Hiver.

Science (sociology)

The Hiver study of sociology is quite broad but focussed on how society is affected by many factors. Thus a Hiver social scientist may know a little about planetology but only in terms of how axial tilt can affect the social dynamics of a nest. By definition, Hiver sociology is also the study of manipulation but this is an academic study rather than a practical one. A sociologist may know all the details of the great manipulations but still be unable to talk its way out of a nutrient paste wrapper.

Streetwise

The Streetwise skill normally applies to societies other than Hiver nests, as normal manipulation is more useful there. A Hiver with Streetwise has experience of dealing with other cultures 'from the bottom up' and may be quite adept at finding itself a niche where its obvious alien-ness is put aside due to its usefulness or web of protectors who think they owe it a favour.

Survival

The Survival skill represents the usual wilderness skills for Hivers but also the ability to prepare properly balanced meals from whatever is available. This may mean scraping yucky mould off the under-deck plumbing but to a Hiver this is the equivalent of hunting game and gathering berries.

Tactics (economic)

Where other strategists think in terms of starships and ground forces, Hivers are skilled at economic warfare. The Tactics (economic) skill can be used whenever a plan is formulated to influence or disrupt an organised economy. This could be large, such as a planetary economy or relatively small; for example, a Hiver might plan to undermine the share price of a small shipping company. Simple profit is one reason but the Hiver might want to weaken the company or use its financial vulnerability to coerce it into doing what the Hiver wants.

Hiver Nests

2D	Nest Type	Benefits	Notes
2–3	Specialist – Industrial	Profession (any), 1 Additional mustering out benefit of any type, including additional cash rolls.	A nest specialising in industry for profit or the construction of a specialist item such as starships.
4–5	Specialist – Economic	Broker, 1 additional cash roll upon mustering out.	A nest specialising in mercantile and economic matters.
6–8	General/ Nurturing	Resolve +1, 1 additional benefit roll of any type.	Most nests have no specific focus beyond nurturing and supporting their members.
9–10	Specialist – Academic	EDU +1, Science (any)	A nest specialising in research and experimentation in one or more fields.
11–12	Specialist – Social	RES +1, Persuade	A nest spiralising in the social sciences, particularly the art of manipulation.

BACKGROUND SKILLS AND BASIC TRAINING

All Hivers receive a general education from their nest. Whilst basic education tends to be similar for all Hivers, the type of nest a Hiver comes from may influence its development. Nest type can be selected or determined randomly using a 2D roll.

All Hivers from the Hive Federation are fluent in the sign forms of Hiver and Gurvin, and may also know Anglic. Those with a Voder can translate all common languages and a few spoken in areas on the far side of Hiver territory from the other races of Charted Space. Knowing a language means being able to understand it and write it, but not to speak it without the aid of a Voder or similar device.

All Hivers gain background skills at level 0 like other sophonts, receiving a number of skills equal to their Education DM. These skills are chosen from those listed on P8 of the Traveller Core Rulebook. In addition, all Hivers gain Persuade 0 and Survival 0. They do not receive basic training in their first term (or any other term) but will gain skills, characteristic modifications or other benefits depending on their nest type.

Skills and benefits are gained only from the Hiver's first home nest. Some Hivers change nests many times, but will succeed or fail in their new nest based on what they already know.

CAREERS

Hivers can enter most careers and function within them, but are unsuited to any field requiring combat or aggressive confrontation. Similarly, highly physical careers such as being a professional athlete are an unlikely choice for a Hiver. Some do become artists, musicians and even stand-up comedians, but this is always with some goal in mind. Hivers do not create art for the sake of expression; they create art to manipulate people. There is no impediment to entering such a career if the Hiver can physically perform the necessary tasks, but there will always be an underlying aim.

Hiver Traveller Creation: Key Concepts

Hiver Traveller creation is complex, like their society. The career options open to them depend on the sort of nest they belong to. A Hiver's first nest determines their initial education and skills, and is the most important since Hivers do not have an equivalent to basic training in careers. When a Hiver changes nest it takes with it whatever skills it has and does not get any additional ones for joining a new nest. The Hiver must make use of what it has, so the decision to change nests is a weighty one. Moving outside a Hiver's area of expertise without the skills to be a success elsewhere can result in complete disaster and disgrace.

Hivers that enter careers outside Hive Federation territory use the normal rules for those careers. For Hivers within the Federation, career and society are intertwined to a much greater degree. Survival and career progress are handled differently; Hivers can gain and lose status depending on their successes – or perceived successes – in their chosen field and are unlikely to suffer serious harm in the course of their activities unless they meet with misfortune.

Advancement does not bring with it conventional ranks. Instead a Hiver's status in society may change – and can increase or decrease along the way. Almost all Hivers dream of reaching Manipulator status, but few do. The rest might content themselves with being a well-respected Senior in their nest… but there is always feeling that those who fall short of Manipulator were lacking in merit or resolve.

It is conceivable a Hiver might enter a career outside its home society, for example joining the Imperial interstellar Scout Service as a consultant. All attempts to join such services are subject to a -4DM, increased to -8 if the service is one requiring conflict. Once the Hiver has joined, survival and advancement proceed normally.

In their own careers, Hivers do not check for survival. The Hive Federation is in general a very safe place for Hivers, so only bad luck or the actions of others are likely to harm a Hiver. Qualification and advancement are also handled differently to the *Core Traveller Rules*. A Hiver automatically qualifies for a given career if it is a member of a nest that supports that career. However, some Hivers are unsuited to their current field of endeavour. Thus rather than attempting to qualify for a career, a Hiver joins a nest working in that field and is automatically accepted into the career, but will suffer a negative DM to Advancement checks if they do not meet the minimum requirements. This means that junior members of a career tend to stay that way unless they have real talent, which is unlikely to be coincidental.

A Hiver checks for Advancement each term, but Advancement is always governed by RES rather than a characteristic keyed to its career – doing well in Hiver society is all about convincing others to look up to you rather than being good at your job. For a Hiver to be sure of advancing in their career they must actually be good at what they do (avoiding the negative Advancement DM) and also good at convincing people they are.

An Advancement check is made by rolling 2D and applying the RES DM. The result is applied immediately, and can change on the next Advancement check. For example, a Hiver might have a good few years and be considered a Senior, but then fall into eclipse and be regarded once again as merely an Adult. If Manipulator status is acquired, this is not necessarily permanent. An eclipsed Manipulator is will usually want people to believe they are keeping a low profile whilst they work on something big.

The first time a Hiver reaches Senior status, and when Manipulator status is achieved, a one-off benefit is gained. This depends on the Hiver's field of endeavour. A Hiver that loses either of these statuses and later regains them does not gain the benefit again, even if they are now working in a different field of endeavour.

As already noted, Hivers do not receive basic training in their career, either at the start or if they switch careers. Changing careers requires moving to a different nest, though this may be done remotely if the Hiver cannot make the move in person. Changing nests is, on the face of it, a trivial administrative matter. However, there are nuances that may not initially be apparent. A Hiver that changes nests remotely misses out on the opportunity to meet new nest-mates in person and establish a relationship with them.

Changing career is automatic if the new nest accepts the Hiver. If not, it can try again in a future term. A Hiver who fails to join a new nest can stay with their current career and nest or enter the Hiver Generalist career. A Hiver that wants to move to a different assignment that is supported by their nest can do so automatically. One that wishes to move to an assignment not supported by their nest must move to one that does support the new assignment.

Changing Nest

At the end of any term a Hiver can try to join another nest. This is a matter of convincing the new nest's members they want the Hiver to join and has nothing to do with competence in the field. Incompetence will slow advancement but Hiver society allows any individual to bash away at something they are no good at if that suits their purposes. Thus to join a new nest a Diplomat or Persuade check is made at the difficulty level noted below.

If the Hiver is successful, it may enter any career supported by their new nest type. It may also attempt a transition manipulation. This requires a Persuade check at the noted difficulty level. If successful, the Hiver gains an additional roll on the cash benefits table, representing clever manipulation of the credit transfer process. Members of the new nest will be watching carefully, since a nest-transition manipulation is a good measure of a Hiver's prowess. If the Persuade check is failed, the Hiver suffers a penalty equal to the negative Effect on their Advancement check this term.

Hivers who choose not to make a transition manipulation are taking a safe, cautious approach which does not mark them as destined for greatness. However, since many transition manipulations include attempts to make everyone think the Hiver is not up to anything devious members of the new nest cannot be sure whether they have just been joined by a 'plodder' or a master manipulator. Thus no penalty or stigma attaches to taking the safe route since Hiver society is so thoroughly obfuscatory that nobody can be sure who did or did not do anything, nothing or something entirely different.

Changing Nest

Nest Type	Diplomat/ Persuade Check	Transition Manipulation
Industrial	Routine (6+)	Average (8+)
Economic	Average (8+)	Difficult (10+)
General/ Nurturing	Easy (4+)	Average (8+)
Academic	Average (8+)	Average (8+)
Social	Difficult (10+)	Very Difficult (12+)

Checking for Advancement

Each term, a Hiver must check for advancement. The more driven individuals call it that, whereas ordinary citizens of a nest tend to think of it in terms of status, which 'just happens' rather than being sought out. To see if a Hiver is advanced or reduced in status, make an Average (8+) RES check with any positive or negative modifiers for qualification or other factor such as an unsuccessful nest transition manipulation. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the table below.

Advancement Status

2D + RES	Status
9–	Adult
10–14	Senior
15	Manipulator

Senior and Adult status can change each term. Once attained, Manipulator status is for life. A Hiver who goes straight from Adult to Manipulator also gains the bonus for being a Senior in their nest type – and also gains a place on all manner of watch-lists.

Permanent Manipulator status is gained by achieving the status a second time in succession. It is possible for a Hiver to fall from Manipulator status and regain it, perhaps multiple times, but only those who gain the status and keep it in their next term are Manipulators-for-Life.

Qualification and Status

Nest Type	Min. Qualification	Full Qualification	Senior Bonus	Manipulator Bonus
Industrial	EDU 7+	Profession (any relevant) 2 or Mechanical 2	RES +1	RES +1, Science (sociology)
Economic	INT 7+	Admin 2 or Advocate 2	Broker	RES +1, Science (sociology)
Generalist/ Nurturing	INT 4+	Survival 2 or Medic 2	RES +1	RES +1, Science (sociology)
Academic	EDU 8+	Science (any) 2 or Investigate 2	Science (any relevant)	RES +1, Science (sociology)
Social	INT 8+	Deception 2 or Science (any relevant) 2	RES +1	RES +1, Science (sociology)

For full qualification it is necessary to also meet the minimum qualification.

Penalties for Lack of Qualification

Qualification Status	Penalty on Advancement
Hiver does not meet minimum qualification standards	–6
Hiver meets minimum qualification standards	–2
Hiver is fully qualified	0

Note that securing advancement depends on a Hiver's RES, representing their will to succeed or convince others they have. Lack of qualification imposes difficulties but being persuasive is more important than being highly skilled.

MUSTERING OUT

At the end of its service, a Hiver gains two rolls on the Mustering Out Benefits table per term served, plus any additional benefits gained in the course of Traveller creation, plus or minus the Hiver's Resolve DM. Half (round down) of a Hiver's benefits must be taken as rolls on the cash table. This is more than most other races get, reflecting the fact that a successful Hiver will have played the system from the moment they became a yearling.

Cash and benefits are determined by an unmodified 2D roll, and can actually be negative. Debts are assumed not to have caught up with the Hiver yet. Clever manipulations might deflect it permanently, or the Hiver might keep moving to stay ahead. The debt is probably owed to the Hiver's nest but could be the result of some other activity.

Debts can be used by the referee as plot hooks. Nests will engage bounty hunters to retrieve money from those who have scammed them, and other Hivers who have lost out as a result of manipulations to get this money will likely try to get revenge. This is more to demonstrate their superiority than out of anger, but the effect is the same.

A debt can be reduced by Cr2Dx10,000 by taking a Rival, or by 2Dx25,000 by taking an Enemy. This can be done multiple times. Enemies are likely to be hardened bounty hunters who have been promised a large part of the debt in return for the Hiver's skin, whilst Rivals are likely to be other Hivers or victims of what they consider to be scams.

Personal Transport Vessel: The Hiver is in possession of a small starship suitable for personal travel. Upkeep is the Hiver's responsibility. If owned, the Hiver has complete ownership and can do what they will with the vessel including selling it. If not owned, the vessel can be reclaimed by the Hiver's nest at any time and cannot be sold. The Hiver might instead have 'acquired' the ship by some means, in which case they sort-of-own it but someone else will be expecting to be assigned it or will want it back. This will create adventure hooks which the referee can use in play. Subsequent rolls of 11 or 12 are taken as a Cr500,000 credit voucher to be used for starship upgrades, purchase or operating expenses only.

Tools of the Profession: The Hiver has a set of tools appropriate to their field of endeavour. These are worth a few hundred credits and are of good quality but nothing special. However, they might be seen as a status symbol by some.

Topical Club Membership: The Hiver is a member in good standing of a topical club, which will contribute towards the Hiver's research (or perhaps just pay for the Hiver to be elsewhere). This equates to a High Passage ticket once a month and Cr1,000 for expenses.

MISHAPS

Hivers do not make survival checks in the usual manner. Instead, Mishaps can only occur as a result of Events. Most Mishaps force the Hiver to leave its career and therefore its nest. It may try to join another at the beginning of the next term but if unsuccessful the only career option available is Hiver Drifter until a welcoming nest is found.

Hiver Benefits

2D	Cash	Benefit
2	You have a debt equal to Cr2Dx100000 that will eventually catch up with you	Reduce a debt by Cr2Dx50000, or twice that much if you palm it off onto someone else. Gain an Enemy if you do.
3	You have a debt equal to Cr2Dx10000 that will eventually catch up to you.	Reduce a debt by Cr2Dx10000, or twice that much if you palm it off onto someone else. Gain a Rival if you do.
4	Somehow your funds got diverted elsewhere. You get nothing for this benefit roll, but you are sure there is a Rival or Enemy out there who has stolen your money.	Ship Share
5	You gain 2Dx5000 credits you are not entitled to. You owe this money to your nest but may manage to evade paying it back.	INT +1
6	You gain Cr2Dx5000 credits you are not entitled to. You owe this money to your nest but may manage to evade paying it back.	Topical Club Membership
7	You gain Cr5000. It is legitimately yours.	Tools of the Profession
8	You gain Cr2Dx1000 credits, which is legitimately yours.	Contact
9	You gain Cr2Dx5000 credits, which is legitimately yours.	EDU +1
10	You may choose Cr2Dx10000 credits which belongs to you, or twice that much that is not actually yours. As with other debts you can evade or outrun it.	RES +1
11	You gain Cr100000 of your own, or twice that with a debt attached.	Personal Transport Vessel (not owned)
12	You gain Cr500,000 of your own or Cr1,000,000 with a debt of 2,500,000 owing.	Personal Transport Vessel (owned)

HIVER LIFE EVENTS

Hivers have life events like other races, differing mainly in details. Whenever a Life Event is rolled on the Events Table, determine what has happened by rolling 2D on the table below.

Hiver Benefits

2D	Event
2	You were injured in an accident or perhaps even by violence. Roll on the Hiver Injury Table, below.
3	You suffered a deficiency disease which took its toll on your health. Lose 1 point from any characteristic, determined randomly
4	Your previously good relationship with someone – this may be another Hiver or someone from outside the Hive Federation – collapses. It was probably your fault for manipulating them too hard but you will not admit that. Gain an Enemy.
5	Your work clashes with that of another individual, leading to friction. Despite your attempts to resolve the situation or modify their thinking they remain unreasonably opposed to you. Gain a Rival..
6	You meet someone useful and manipulate them into thinking they owe you their loyalty. Gain an Ally.
7	You make some useful connections. Gain a Contact.
8	Someone was plotting behind your back! You discovered their intentions to make you their puppet and are now wary of them. Convert one Ally or Contact into a Rival. If you have no Allies or Contacts, gain an Enemy
9	You travel and gain new knowledge, which can be used to your advantage. Gain +2 on your next advancement check.
10	You change nests. This is a golden opportunity to shed some of your previous negative credit. Gain one additional Benefits cash roll.
11	You are fortunate to meet a great Manipulator, who shares some secrets with you. You gain a level of Deception, Diplomat or Persuade.
12	You are fortunate to meet a great Manipulator, who shares some secrets with you. You realise it would not do such a thing without a goal in mind. Perhaps the Manipulator recognised your potential and wanted to help but more likely it has a plan for you. Either way, you gain RES +1 and a general feeling of paranoia.

HIVER INJURIES

Many minor injuries can be regenerated but major damage requires medical intervention.

Hiver Injuries

1D	Result
1	You were severely injured. Reduce one physical characteristic by 1D and the other two by 2 points each.
2	You were severely injured, losing an entire limb in a manner that cannot be regrown. Either reduce all physical characteristics by 3 and live with a missing limb or use a robotic one, in which case reduction is 1 point per physical characteristic and you sign with a weird accent.
3	You lost some of your eyes in a manner that cannot be regrown. You can still see but the image is imperfect. You suffer a -1DM on all tasks requiring visual acuity.
4	You were severely scarred in a manner which horrifies other Hivers. Not for your appearance, but because it reminds them that physical violence could happen to their bodies. You suffer a -2DM on all direct interactions with other Hivers.
5	You got badly hurt and it shook your confidence even though you recovered. Reduce Resolve by 1.
6	You made a full recovery from your injuries. It was an interesting experience, but not one to be repeated.

AGING

Hivers become adults at around age 14. Their first term begins at this age. Aging proceeds at almost the same rate as humans, but begins at age 38. This will be the end of the sixth career term. Anagathic drugs do not work on Hivers.

1 ACADEMIC

All Hivers are curious about pretty much everything but few devote themselves full-time to study and research. Those who do may be experimenters or researchers, or may specialise in the fields necessary to support a nest and ensure the well-being of its young.

Open To: Academic Nests. Hivers from Generalist nests may take the Physician Assignment only.
Qualification: Determined by nest.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Experimenter: You believe in direct observation of phenomena and conducting experiments yourself – although usually in a supervisory role with someone else taking any risks.
Researcher: You collect information and lore. This may be on scientific or non-scientific subjects such as the history of a particular alien race. You may also research fields not normally considered academic subjects such as trying to cross-reference the folk tales of different species. It is your approach that defines you as a Researcher; you like to work from existing sources rather than going out in the field.
Physician: You are an expert in the arts and sciences that support a nest, from food preparation and medical procedures to teaching the young through tales of past manipulations.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ACTIVE ACADEMIC (MIN. RES 7+)
1	RES +1	Drive or Flyer	RES +1
2	INT +1	Admin	Deception
3	EDU +1	Persuade	Diplomat
4	Survival	Investigate	Persuade
5	Language	Science	Language
6	Science	Electronics	Science (sociology)
1D	**EXPERIMENTER**	**RESEARCHER**	**PHYSICIAN**
1	Mechanic	Electronics	Medic
2	Electronics	Science	Survival
3	Science	Investigate	Science
4	Vacc Suit	Language	Electronics
5	Investigate	Persuade	Persuade
6	Science	Medic	Medic

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	You are seriously injured, equivalent to a roll of 2 on the Hiver Injury table.
2	Repeated failures have disheartened you. Make a RES check. If you fail, your confidence was shaken and you pass up several opportunities. Lose a number of Benefit rolls equal to the negative Effect. If you succeed, you prove you were right all along (or convince others that you were even if you were not). Gain an Enemy whose plans you cleverly thwarted.
3	You presented a well-researched thesis with a powerful argument for its acceptance and ended up embarrassed and discredited. You do not know if you were just plain wrong or if there are other manipulators working against you. Either way, you lose RES –1.
4	One of your projects went horribly awry but your community rallied around and got you out of trouble without even being manipulated… by you, at least. It is clear someone intervened but you do not know why. You do not have to leave the career but gain a Contact to whom you owe a huge favour. If this is not repaid you will gain a powerful Enemy but if you do what they ask of you when the time comes you will gain them as an Ally instead.
5	Whether you deserved it or not, word got out about some actions on your part that look bad. You cannot manipulate anyone who knows about this, so have left your old life behind to find a new start.
6	Your nest has ceased to exist due to a disaster you may or may not have caused. The survivors were mostly absorbed by other nests but for some reason none would take you.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You are manipulated into taking part in a major project outside your normal field of endeavour. You may roll on any Service Skills table for any career and gain the indicated skill.
4	Things generally go rather well whenever you are involved and you are pleased with the results. More importantly, you get the credit. Gain DM+4 on your next advancement check.
5	You realise some ‘accidents’ were attempts on your life. You are not sure who is behind it despite checking out all likely culprits. Gain 3 Contacts, one of whom is secretly an Enemy. You now carry a gun and have gained a level of Gun Combat skill.
6	An opportunity arises to obtain specialist training. Make a RES check. If successful you may gain a level in any skill you possess.
7	A Life Event occurs.
8	You travel aboard starships. Take one level in Pilot, Astrogation or Engineer.
9	You become involved with the embassy and visit many other nests. Gain an Ally and a Contact.
10	You spend considerable time outside the Hive Federation and have extensively studied various alien races. By ‘studied’ you mean manipulated, of course. Gain an Ally. If you want, you may make an immediate Benefits cash roll but this brings with it a Rival who may have been the source of the money.
11	You provide expert advice to teams engaged in preservation work in the local wilderness. Gain a level of Animals, Recon or Survival.
12	Your nest is threatened and you help figure out a complex manipulation to deflect the threat. Gain a level of Science (sociology) and RES +1 or gain a level of Persuade and a Contact.

2 GENERALIST

Most Hivers are generalists, typically living a normal life as a citizen of any type of nest. The average generalist works at a steady job and indulges their interests in a variety of fields without going very far into any of them. Such individuals are generalists by default but there are others who choose not to specialise or are unable to do so for other reasons.

Open To: Any nest.
Qualification: Determined by nest.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Nest-Citizen: You are an ordinary (perhaps outstanding) citizen of a nest, working to nurture the young and to support the work of the nest as a whole. You are aware you are often manipulated by more determined nest-mates but there is little you can do about it.

Dedicated Generalist: You believe that generalism is the way forward. You will delve into a subject as far as necessary before turning aside for something else. Rather than knowing everything about something, you believe your path to success is to know enough about everything. You are likely a wanderer, going wherever the next topic takes you.

Drifter: You seem to have no purpose – although this may be a deception of course – and simply wander aimlessly from place-to-place and field to field. Your wanderings might take you far beyond the Hive Federation. At some point something is sure to pique your interest or seem worth getting involved in. On that day you will no longer be a drifter but until you find that purpose you will continue.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ACTIVE CITIZEN (MIN. RES 7+)
1	RES +1	Survival	RES +1
2	STR +1	Steward	Deception
3	DEX +1	Profession	Diplomat
4	END +1	Admin	Persuade
5	INT +1	Animals	Language
6	Jack-of-all-Trades	Drive or Flyer	Science (sociology)
1D	**NEST-CITIZEN**	**GENERALIST**	**HIVER DRIFTER**
1	Animals	Streetwise	Streetwise
2	Survival	Investigate	Survival
3	Drive or Flyer	Recon	Recon
4	Admin	Persuade	Deception
5	Profession	Electronics	Gun Combat
6	Steward	Science	RES +1

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	You are seriously injured, equivalent to a roll of 2 on the Hiver Injury table.
2	You are threatened with violence and do not like it at all. Make a RES check. If you fail, your confidence is shaken and you pass up several opportunities. Lose a number of Benefit rolls equal to the negative Effect. If you succeed, gain an Enemy who is even more resentful at being manipulated into not hurting you the first time.
3	It all went wrong. You do not know if you failed to plan properly or there are other manipulators working against you. Either way, you lose RES –1.
4	Everything went wrong, then suddenly it was all fine again. Someone intervened but you do not know why. You do not have to leave the career but gain a Contact to whom you owe a huge favour. If this is not repaid you will gain a powerful Enemy but if you do what they ask of you when the time comes you will gain them as an Ally instead.
5	Your reputation is blackened, which you may or may not deserve, but either way you cannot manipulate anyone who knows about your shame. You left your old life behind to get away from this situation.
6	Your nest was involved in conflict and has ceased to exist. The survivors were mostly absorbed by other nests but for some reason none would take you.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You are manipulated into taking part in a major project outside your normal field of endeavour. You may roll on any Service Skills table for any career and gain the indicated skill.
4	Things generally go rather well whenever you are involved and you are pleased with the results. More importantly, you get the credit. Gain DM+4 on your next advancement check.
5	You make contacts and influence people. Gain D3 Contacts.
6	An opportunity arises to obtain specialist training. Make a RES check. If successful you may gain a level in any skill you possess.
7	A Life Event occurs.
8	You travel aboard starships. Take one level in Pilot, Astrogation or Engineer
9	You become involved with the embassy and visit many other nests. Gain an Ally and a Contact.
10	You spend considerable time outside the Hive Federation. Gain a level of Deception or Streetwise
11	You are involved in preservation work in the local wilderness. Gain a level of Animals, Recon or Survival.
12	Your nest is threatened and everyone receives militia training to help defend it. Gain a level of Gun Combat or Heavy Weapons.

3 MANIPULATOR

All Hivers use manipulation on a constant basis but for most it is a means to an end – and that end is usually minor in scope. Those with more vision or who simply enjoy manipulation for its own sake may sometimes make a career out of it.

Open To: Social nests. Also, any Hiver who is currently a Senior or Manipulator may enter this profession at the beginning of their next term.
Qualification: Determined by nest.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Master Manipulator: You focus on manipulation for its own sake, although there is always a goal to any project you undertake.
Starfaring Manipulator: You have travelled extensively and perhaps even learned how to operate a starship yourself. Of course, there will always be a reason why you do not get someone else to do the work for you.
Military Leader: You assumed a command position in the ground or space forces. Most of your subordinates were from other races of the Hive Federation and naturally they are the ones doing any actual fighting.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ADVANCED MANIPULATOR (MIN. RES 10+)
1	RES +1	Carouse	Tactics (economic)
2	INT +1	Streetwise	Tactics (military)
3	EDU +1	Persuade	Tactics (naval)
4	Survival	Deception	Science (sociology)
5	Language	Diplomat	Advocate
6	Persuade	RES +1	Broker
1D	**MASTER MANIPULATOR**	**STARFARING MANIPULATOR**	**MILITARY LEADER**
1	Gambler	Tactics (naval)	Tactics (military or naval)
2	Diplomat	Engineer	Gun Combat
3	Persuade	Pilot	Gunner
4	Carouse	Astrogation	Astrogation
5	Streetwise	Electronics	Heavy Weapons
6	Science (sociology)	Vacc Suit	Vacc Suit

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	You are seriously injured, equivalent to a roll of 2 on the Hiver Injury table.
2	Repeated failures have disheartened you. Make a RES check. If you fail, you conclude that you are not fit to be a Manipulator. Lose a number of points from RES equal to the negative Effect. If you succeed, you realise someone is working against you. Gain an Enemy but you do not have to leave the career.
3	A series of disasters befalls you and your reputation as a manipulator is in tatters. You must leave the career but are determined to prove you are in fact the best at what you do. Gain RES +1 but also D3 Rivals.
4	You needed help and had to beg another Manipulator to assist you. This did not sit well but at least the rival demanded an extortionate price in money and deeds. As a result you feel a bit better than if they had simply assisted you gratis. You now have a Rival to whom you owe an enormous favour. If you do not repay your benefactor when the time comes you will gain a powerful Enemy.
5	You were ejected from your home nest for taking your manipulations too far on a constant basis. The inferior nest-citizens were just too susceptible and that is not your fault.
6	Your nest suffered a disaster and broke up, with most citizens finding new nests quickly. There are rumours you caused the problem – which may or may not be true. You are out on your own and have gained D3 Rivals who resent what you may or may not have done.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You inveigle your way into taking part in a major project outside your normal field of endeavour. You may roll on any Service Skills table for any career and gain the indicated skill.
4	You work towards advancement and of course you succeed! Gain DM+4 on your next advancement check.
5	You are determined to achieve Manipulator status and become a legend among your people. Gain DM+1 to all future advancement checks. You may receive this bonus in future terms.
6	You decide you need to develop a particular skill. Make a RES check. If successful you may gain a level in any skill you possess.
7	A Life Event occurs.
8	You travel aboard starships. Take one level in Pilot, Astrogation or Engineer.
9	You become involved with the embassy and visit many other nests. Gain an Ally and a Contact.
10	You spend considerable time outside the Hive Federation, practicing your manipulation skills on aliens with a very different culture. Gain a level of Streetwise and a non-Hiver Contact.
11	You act as a facilitator for a major endeavour – a diplomatic mission, a trade treaty of something similar. Gain RES +1 and an Ally.
12	Your home region suffers a disaster and naturally you are tasked with resolving it. Make a RES check. If successful you may make an immediate additional advancement check with DM+4. If this results in higher status than you already hold, you are advanced to this status. In addition, gain one level in any skill of your choice and a Contact outside Hiver society.

4 MERCHANT

Some Hivers specialise in various aspects of mercantile activity. This can mean acting as a deal-maker such as a starport broker, taking a more behind-the scenes role as an economic analyst or accountant, or obtaining money through what others might call questionable means as a con-person.

Open To: Economic nests. Hivers from Generalist nests may take the Con-Person Assignment only.
Qualification: Determined by nest.

ASSIGNMENTS

Choose one of the following:

Negotiator: You buy and sell cargo, starships, planets or anything else really, on your own behalf or for others.
Administrator: You might do some direct dealing but your main field of interest is spotting trends and the factors that affect them… and figuring out how to nudge the flow in the right direction. Whether you are a starship's purser or an economic fixer who manipulates planetary economies, the principles are the same.
Con-Person: You manipulate people in ways that cause you to become richer. Some of them seem to dislike this and call your profession by unpleasant names.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

1D	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SERVICE SKILLS	ACTIVE MERCHANT (MIN. RES 7+)
1	RES +1	Drive or Flyer	RES +1
2	INT +1	Streetwise	Deception
3	EDU +1	Persuade	Diplomat
4	Survival	Broker	Persuade
5	Language	Tactics (economic)	Carouse
6	Persuade	Advocate	Broker
1D	**NEGOTIATOR**	**ADMINISTRATOR**	**CON-PERSON**
1	Broker	Admin	Streetwise
2	Persuade	Science (economics)	Persuade
3	Diplomat	Broker	Broker
4	Science (economics)	Science (sociology)	Electronics
5	Streetwise	Tactics (economic)	Carouse
6	Carouse	Diplomat	Gambler

MISHAPS TABLE

1D	MISHAP
1	You are seriously injured, equivalent to a roll of 2 on the Hiver Injury table.
2	Repeated failures have disheartened you. Make a RES check. If you fail, your confidence was shaken and you passed up several opportunities. Lose a number of benefits equal to the negative Effect. If you succeed, you suffer no significant consequences but gain an Enemy who is trying to discredit you for their own reasons.
3	Your carefully laid plans result in a major financial loss for the people who supposed to benefit. You do not know if you were just plain wrong or if there are other manipulators working against you. Either way, you lose RES –1.
4	Everything was going well until a gigantic financial sinkhole swallowed you up. You are in debt for MCr2Dx1 and the people you owe it to – or who say you owe it to them – are dangerous. It is possible a mysterious benefactor straightens out the mess, in which case you do not have to leave the career but owe a favour to this benefactor. If this is not repaid you will gain a powerful Enemy but if you do what they ask of you when the time comes you will gain them as an Ally instead. If nobody helps you, you still owe the money to someone. Gain an Enemy who is pursuing you but also 10% of the amount you owe as cash.
5	Whether you deserved it or not, word got out about some actions on your part that look bad. You cannot manipulate anyone who knows about this, so have left your old life behind to find a new start.
6	Your nest suffered total financial collapse and its members found other nests more to their liking. You may or may not be to blame but no local nest would take you so you have had to leave the region.

EVENTS TABLE

2D	EVENT
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table.
3	You are manipulated into taking part in a major project outside your normal field of endeavour. You may roll on any Service Skills table for any career and gain the indicated skill.
4	Things generally go rather well whenever you are involved, and you are pleased with the results. More importantly, you get the credit. Gain DM+4 on your next advancement check.
5	You make a big score. You can take the money or claim the credit but not both. If you take the money, you gain Cr2Dx100000. If you claim the credit you gain DM+1 on all advancement checks in this career and a Contact who is impressed with your work.
6	An opportunity arises to obtain specialist training. Make a RES check. If successful you may gain a level in any skill you possess at level 0 or higher.
7	A Life Event occurs.
8	You travel aboard starships. Take one level in Pilot, Astrogation or Engineer.
9	You become involved with the embassy and visit many other nests. Gain an Ally and a Contact.
10	You spend considerable time outside the Hive Federation, making a living among aliens with a very different culture. Gain a level of Streetwise and a non-Hiver Contact.
11	You facilitate a big transaction on the part of a major organisation such as a planetary administration. This boosts your confidence and you gain RES +1 along with an Ally.
12	You help get your home nest out of a major financial problem. Gain one level of Tactics (economic) and a Contact outside Hiver society.

CHAPTER-THIRTY FIVE

HIVERS AS TRAVELLERS

Hivers are very different from most other races but their society does produce a great many Travellers. Most are driven either by curiosity or a plan they are working on but Hivers also travel for more mundane reasons. Trade, diplomacy and intelligence-gathering will take Hivers far beyond the Federation, whilst within it individuals can be encountered going about all manner of business.

A Hiver Traveller will typically kill its larvae even when there is a wilderness for them to develop in. It would not be acceptable to allow larvae to develop into Hivers where there is no nest for them to join. The killing is done in an efficient and detached manner; it is merely a household chore like any other. For this reason Hivers will sometimes forget that other species are upset by the idea of murdering their offspring and may not be all that discreet about it. Or they may do it in front of crewmates in order to elicit a response the Hiver finds useful.

Hivers cannot readily convey emotion through their Voder, although agitated movements might be translated to emphasis by its programming. Hivers do not feel or display emotions to such an extent as humans and other creatures but they do have some deep-rooted behaviours that are similar. One is an aversion to physical violence. Hivers can fight but they are rarely good at it and will tend to scuttle away from danger even if they have decided they must stand and fight. This urge to escape exhibits in any threatening situation; a Hiver may be sent into ignominious retreat as readily by a shouting match as by a drawn gun or knife.

At longer ranges, Hivers are much better able to cope. A Hiver equipped with a long-range rifle may be quite effective and over the sort of distances space combat occurs they are able to deal rationally with the situation. The ability to carry out harmful actions increases with psychological distance from the physical reality of the act. Thus a Hiver may be quite capable of poisoning someone so they die in agony or manipulating a situation to result in someone being harmed by others. They are, in human terms, physical cowards rather than pacifists. Indeed, there are many who consider that manipulating a person, culture or a whole species so that its nature is changed is doing the absolute worst form of violence – but Hivers have no problem with doing so.

They are also insatiably curious, even about things outside their normal sphere of interest. Curiosity wars with fear of coming to harm, with the inevitable result that Hivers like to have others take risks for them. Indeed, a situation where someone is manoeuvred into carrying out a dangerous experiment or engaging in combat is interesting in many ways – the deed itself, the process of getting the subject to carry it out and their reactions to both the action and the manipulation that incited it.

Hivers can be surprisingly confrontational, considering their fear of coming to harm. Hivers feel that some problems are best tackled directly, by laying out the parameters of the situation and coming to a consensus. This can mean they are sometimes rather too blunt about issues non-Hivers might talk around. A Hiver would see nothing wrong with openly raising the question of whether to kill and eat the ship's cat to preserve rations or even just to vary the diet of the crew. At other times they are unnecessarily devious, engaging in an elaborate manipulation rather than just making a request or suggestion. As always, the approach chosen might be manipulative or done out of curiosity – the Hiver knows it can obtain the salt by asking but it may be far more interesting to manipulate others into passing it – and then not to use it so as to observe the reaction.

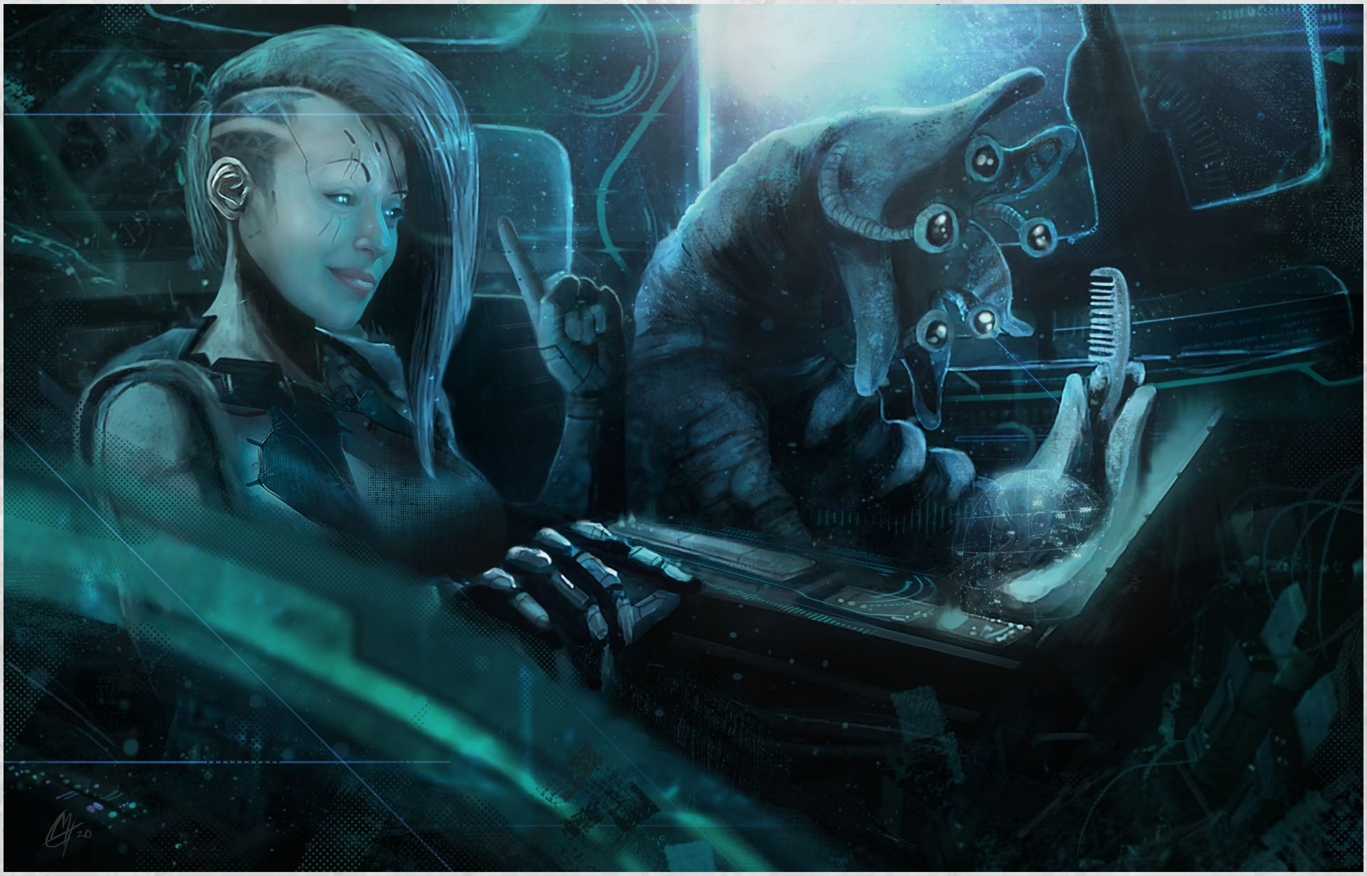
A Hiver abroad in the universe will be constantly carrying out little social experiments on the people around it. They do not understand questions about why they feel they have the right to do this or to manipulate others for reasons important or trivial. Manipulation is something a Hiver can do, so it does. It is no less instinctive or natural than eating or breathing. Would a human who fell into water consider not swimming? It is widely presumed that Hivers feel they are superior to other races but it is more likely that they are competing for survival and dominance like everyone else, just using their own innate skill set.

Everything a Hiver does is for a reason. Hivers do not play or amuse themselves, they have no parental instincts towards their equivalent of infants and are interested only in educating – rather than amusing – their yearlings. Thus if a Hiver plays a video game with someone it is not for the fun of playing the game. The Hiver may be observing the opponent's behaviour or engaging in some manipulation but it most certainly is not playing for enjoyment of the game itself. Hivers have no concept of this.

Hivers do not have religion, and have never displayed any sort of psionic powers, but they are interested in those of others. Their interest generally overwhelms any respect the Hiver may have, unless its personal safety is compromised. Thus a Hiver would probably not wander into the middle of a state funeral and cause chaos, because it can figure out this course of action might be dangerous to it. However, it might get someone else to do so, just to see how everyone reacts. Sometimes this lack of respect for other people's social boundaries stems from cultural differences and is entirely innocent but Hivers display an enormously hypocritical attitude to social conformity. They like others to follow the rules and limit behaviours but do not feel bound to do the same. Thus a Hiver might demand that others follow the rules or to manipulate them into doing so but see nothing wrong with breaking every rule in the book when it feels like it.

Playing a Hiver is thus quite a challenge. It will want to be in control of the situation but indirectly. A Hiver might assume a straight leadership role under some circumstances but is more likely to push the other Travellers in the direction it wants. It may agree to stop manipulating people but it simply cannot; getting others to act the way it wants is an instinct going back to the proto-Hiver days on Guaran. It must also be remembered that Hivers fear personal violence. Whilst confrontation of problems is sometimes desirable, this takes the form of an academic debate riddled with clever tricks intended to get a result whether or not the Hiver 'wins' the argument.

A Hiver may begin play as a Traveller with more of everything than a typical Traveller. More money and more benefits but also more Enemies, Rivals and complications. This is a good thing – Manipulations work better in a complex and unstable environment. Indeed, this is perhaps the defining factor for a true Hiver – they believe they can impose their will on a chaotic universe. For some, it is actually true.



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